

Exploring processes of adaptation in a group of post-2004 Polish migrants in the UK: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Abstract

This study explores how a group of post-2004 Polish migrants have adapted to life in the UK. Eight participants were interviewed and transcripts were analysed using the qualitative methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Four master themes emerged: relating to Poland; relating to the UK; impact on self; and adaptive ability. Migrants' relationship with Poland and the UK is considered and the psychological impact of migration on the individual is explored. The findings suggest that migration brings benefits as well as challenges. It is evident that participants are equipped with a range of adaptive characteristics and employ a variety of strategies to cope with difficulties, and these are explored in detail. Exploring identity processes reveals that participants' adaptation is aided by prior identification with UK and 'Western culture', which is understood as a reflection of the socio-economic changes taking place in Poland since 1989. Theoretical implications and relevance of the findings to the field of counselling psychology are considered and further areas of exploration are discussed.

Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic of migration and provides an outline of important migration related concepts. The psychological impact of migration is discussed, including reference to the prevalence of mental health problems amongst migrant groups, related stressors and the role of coping. Identity process theory is introduced and its relevance to providing understanding of the psychological processes involved in adaptation is discussed. This is followed by an overview of previous and current Polish migration to the UK, with reference made to the changing social context and the resulting impact on psychological health and adaptation. The chapter ends with a summary and a rationale for the study.

Migration, the act of leaving one habitat and relocating to another for a permanent or prolonged period, has been an aspect of human behaviour for millennia. From communities of nomadic hunter-gatherers on the move in search of food, to business executives relocating offices, migration has been and continues to be a part of life for many. Migration can be internal, i.e. movement within a country, or external, i.e. between countries, and usually implies a stay of at least twelve months (United Nations, 1998). In recent years, globalisation, world politics, and increased accessibility to low cost travel, are some of the factors which have contributed to the increase in number of people migrating internationally. Current world migration levels are at their highest since records began. According to the United Nations' (UN) most recent report on trends in world population (UN, 2009), there are approximately 214 million international migrants worldwide at present, constituting over 3 per cent of the global population. In the United Kingdom (UK), the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) most recent report on migration found that in 2008, an estimated 590,000 people migrated to the UK compared to 565,000 in 2005 (ONS, 2009a). According to the same report, in 2008 approximately 427,000 people left the UK. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports an annual growth rate of international migration of 2.9 per cent (IOM, 2005). Clearly, the movement of people from one culture to another is a significant feature of human experience.

Reasons for migrating are many and varied and reflect the diversity of individual circumstances. Examples range from moving to join family, for study, work and economic betterment, to seeking asylum due to fleeing from war, natural disaster or from religious and

political persecution. Though the examples perhaps support a distinction between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ migration, the difference between the two categories is not always clearly definable, and the decision to migrate may be influenced by circumstances which include aspects of both ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ types of migration (Kristiansen et al., 2007). Whilst acknowledging this categorical caveat, the focus of this study is on the type of migration that would generally be considered ‘voluntary’.

Different theories of migration, particularly regarding trends and motivating factors, are in abundance though dominant concepts exist (Castles and Miller, 2009). One of the earliest theoretical models of migration was developed by Ernst Ravenstein in the late nineteenth century. Ravenstein cited several ‘push/pull’ factors involved in the process of migration, for example, referring to people being ‘pushed’ away from an overcrowded or oppressive area and being ‘pulled’ to a new location by the prospect of increased economic opportunity (Ravenstein, 1889). Later and contemporary theories of migration have largely centred on the original ‘push/pull’ concept but have been modified to incorporate further factors such as personal, social and geo-political circumstances (Castles and Miller, 2009). Despite the current prevalence of research, migration theory remains highly complex and lacks a single theoretical framework. Partly this is due to the diversity of migration experiences, which traditional, positivist modes of enquiry have been insufficient in accurately representing (Castles, 2010).

Psychological impact of migration

The process of migration can be a particularly stressful experience (Bhugra, 2004; Bhugra et al., 2005; Burnett et al., 2002; Garza-Guerrero, 1974) and the mental health of migrants has been a focus of study since the early twentieth century. Early studies drew attention to the prevalence of mental illness amongst migrant groups, compared to the indigenous population. For example, an often cited study by Ødegaard (1932), famously reported higher rates of schizophrenia amongst Norwegian migrants to the USA, and Faris and Warren Dunham (1939) demonstrated similar results for migrants in Chicago. Later studies reveal similarly higher rates of mental health problems amongst migrant populations. For example, Cochrane (1977), using hospital records, found significantly increased rates of admission to

psychiatric services for most immigrants in the UK. And, Krupinski (1967) reported a high incidence of psychiatric disorders amongst non-British immigrants to Australia.

More recent research suggests a less certain correlation between migration and psychological disorder. In a review of recent studies on mental health and migration, though Bhugra (2004) found the same higher prevalence of schizophrenia in migrants, particularly African-Caribbean people, as was found in earlier investigations, such studies have been challenged by others who have perceived them to be methodologically flawed (e.g. Iley and Nazroo, 2001; Sashidharan, 1993). Regarding the prevalence of common mental disorders, e.g. anxiety and depression, a survey conducted by the Department of Health (2002) found only modest differences between migrants and the general population, and found lower rates of mental health diagnoses for South Asian migrants compared to non-migrants. It has been acknowledged that results from such studies may be distorted by the application of Western models of mental health assessment to people of non-Western background (Bhugra and Ayonrinde, 2004). Though migration clearly has inherent stressors, not all migrants will develop mental health problems. Some may perceive migration as a catalyst for personal growth or reinvention. Others may be encouraged by new opportunities that arise in the new culture. What is perhaps more likely is that migration will be experienced as consisting of both positive and negative factors (Ward et al., 2001). For asylum seekers and refugees, whose experience of migration may encompass exceptionally traumatic circumstances, rates of psychiatric problems are more likely to be elevated (De Jong et al., 2000; Murphy et al., 2002). Though most migrants are not fleeing from conflict or severe hardship, this does not preclude them from enduring psychological difficulties however, since all types of migration are potentially stressful (Bhugra et al., 2001). The conclusion is that the impact of migration includes a wide range of possible outcomes.

The migration experience can be regarded as constituting three phases, i.e. pre-migration, the migration itself, and the post-migration stage (Bhugra and Jones, 2001). How migration is experienced is largely dependent on the circumstances surrounding each stage of the migration process, each phase playing an important role in influencing the psychological impact on the individual. The pre-migration stage refers to the conditions leading up to the decision to move. Significant factors here include reasons for migrating, e.g. whether

voluntary or forced, preparation and relevant experience, skills and educational attainment, language ability, pre-existing physical and mental health conditions, social and economic circumstances, and personality. Also relevant at this stage is the development of expectations regarding the host culture, for example, McKelvey and Webb, (1996), and Murphy (2003), have highlighted the role of pre-migratory expectations in post-migratory mental health. Their findings suggest an association between unmet expectations or misreckoning regarding the host culture, and emotions such as anger, disappointment and frustration, which may lead to more pronounced psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression. Landau-Stanton (1990) argues that congruence between expectations and outcomes is a major factor in the subsequent psychological health of most immigrants. The second phase of migration represents the journey and process of leaving one country and entering another. This may be traumatic and dangerous, for example, leaving suddenly without having the opportunity to make adequate preparations, making a perilous boat trip, not possessing valid travel visas, or may simply involve flying comfortably from one destination and freely entering another. Post-migration represents the final phase of the process and relates to how the migrant adapts and responds to the social, cultural and practical circumstances of the new culture. The focus of this study is on how this final stage is experienced.

Each stage of the migratory process incorporates a range of factors affecting the process of adaptation. Specific aspects of the post-migration stage that influence the psychological response include external factors such as social status, poverty, cultural differences and cultural misinterpretation, how a person (or group) is received by the resident society, language problems, social support, employment, finance and housing (Berry, 1992; Littlewood, and Lipsedge, 1989). Additionally, internal factors such as personality and one's ability to adapt are also relevant (Bhugra et al., 2004). The many different variables involved, which may act individually or in combination, make fully understanding the post-migration outcome complex.

An important concept associated with the psychological response to migration is acculturation, i.e. the effect of one culture coming into contact with another and the resulting impact upon the individual. Berry (1980), who writes extensively on the subject, identifies four possible outcomes of the process of acculturation: integration, assimilation, separation,

and marginalisation. Integration is understood as participating in and engaging with the new culture whilst maintaining the old; assimilation refers to abandoning the old culture in favour of the new; separation involves maintaining the original culture whilst rejecting the new; and marginalisation refers to distancing from both cultures, leading to alienation (Berry, 2003). Berry perceives the four different responses as ‘strategies’ which are chosen by the migrant and influenced by his or her willingness to adapt and by the similarity of the two cultures. Acculturation can be measured by observing changes in cultural behaviour patterns, for example, how the migrant relates to the religion, food, social norms and attitudes of the new culture (Berry, 1992). Such concepts are closely associated with identity and with self-esteem. According to Berry, the vast majority of studies have found the most effective adaptive strategy to be integration and the least effective, marginalisation, and both marginalisation and separation are found to be associated with increased levels of stress (Berry et al., 2002). Whilst acknowledging the influence of acculturation theory, Berry’s concept has received significant criticism. For example, Rudmin (2003) argues that acculturation theory makes the invalid assumption that all migrants can be characterised equally. Furthermore, Phinney (2003) challenges Berry’s contention that migrants actively choose an acculturation strategy, and argues that social context may determine the outcome.

Minas (1999, cited in Bhugra, 2004, p.253) specifies several factors likely to lead to difficulties in the post-migration phase, i.e. unemployment, low language ability, and rejection by the host community. The relationship between unemployment and psychological distress has been well documented, e.g. Murphy and Athanasou (1999), and the association of poor language skills with acculturative stress has also been described (Bhugra, 2004). Both issues relate to the concepts of self-efficacy and locus of control, i.e. an individual’s perception of how much control one has over one’s life. Where self-efficacy is inhibited, for example, due to being out of work or not being able to sufficiently communicate, this may represent an external locus of control, which has been repeatedly associated with psychological stress (Ward et al., 2001). Rejection in the form of racism can be especially detrimental to well-being. Fernando (1993) describes this as the most significant risk factor in migrants’ psychological health.

Identity process theory

Though migration may not necessarily lead to the development of major psychological problems, a greater certainty is that the process of moving from one culture to another will result in some form of personal change (Ward et al., 2001). A perspective from which the impact of significant life events and transitions upon the individual can be studied lies in theories of identity. The significance of moving from one culture to another, becoming an outsider, and being exposed to a different language and different social rules, means that individual identity is likely to be affected in some way. Recognition of this relationship is seen in the prevalence of academic literature, journals and centres of learning, devoted to exploring the relationship between migration and identity, which, in addition to the concepts of stress and coping, is a major focus of research in the field of migration (Ward et al., 2001).

Definitions of identity abound and differ according to the theoretical paradigm from which they originate. Breakwell (1986) was interested in exploring the substance of identity and developed identity process theory (IPT) in an attempt to create a coherent understanding of identity formation across the life-span, bringing together established theories, and focusing specifically on the psychological and social processes involved in identity development. Breakwell proposes that such processes are particularly apparent when identity is in some way challenged, for example, when individuals experience a significant life event and/or come into contact with social phenomena that causes them to question their self-concept.

IPT holds that identity is a dynamic social product that is shaped or constructed through an interaction of memory, consciousness and biology, with social experiences. Breakwell describes the structure of identity as organised by two components, the content dimension and the value dimension. The content dimension refers to phenomena that contribute to the uniqueness of an individual, including aspects of personal identity such as values and attitude, and aspects of social identity such as group memberships. Significantly, in IPT personal and social identity are not regarded as separate entities as these are considered part of the same continuum of selfhood, i.e. social identity is perceived to develop into personal identity over time. The content dimension is dynamic and evolving, responding to experiences from the social world and shaping identity by processes of assimilation/accommodation and evaluation. Assimilation and accommodation refer to how

information from the social world is received into the identity structure, i.e. how new material is absorbed (assimilation) and how the existing identity structure adjusts (accommodation) to make way for new material. The process of evaluation relates to the value and meaning ascribed to each specific content element, representing the value dimension of identity structure.

According to Breakwell, the desired identity structure is guided by specific principles, i.e. continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. While the possible cultural specificity of these principles is acknowledged, Breakwell considers them to be appropriate for Western capitalist cultures (Breakwell, 2010). Social context plays an important role in determining identity, and changes within that context will provoke some form of adjustment within the identity structure. Breakwell contends that where the processes of assimilation/accommodation are unable to meet the guiding principles, this results in a threat to identity. In order for the individual to avert such threats some form of action will be necessary. Attempts to remove or modify the threat are referred to as coping strategies, and these may operate at the interpersonal, intergroup, or intra-psychic level. The study of coping strategies features strongly in research that is concerned with how migrants respond to stress, and is explored further in the following section.

It would be expected that threats to identity are more likely to occur when an individual moves between significantly different social contexts, where guiding principles such as self-efficacy may be challenged. Migration represents a pertinent example of a potentially threatening social transition, though it may not be perceived as threatening by all individuals. The apparent prevalence of mental health problems amongst migrant groups, particularly amongst ‘forced migrants’, suggests that the chances of identity being somehow threatened are high however. Where the host and home cultures are similar, this may result in fewer threats to identity though this is an under researched topic.

Coping and adaptation

The study of coping in migrants has been a major focus of recent migration research (Ward et al., 2001). Investigating coping responses provides further understanding of the process of adaptation and highlights factors associated with successful and problematic post migration

experiences. Research suggests that how migrants respond to the numerous challenges of migration differs for each individual, and it is likely that migrants' psychological responses to challenges are closely related to their adaptability and to the coping strategies they adopt (Bhugra, 2004).

The general literature on coping is extensive (Zeidner and Ender, 1996). Coping strategies can be understood as active responses to difficult circumstances and may be highly personalised, though three common strategies have been identified: appraisal focused, problem focused, and emotion focused approaches (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006). Examples of appraisal focused strategies include cognitive reframing, e.g. perceiving difficulties as learning experiences. Problem focused strategies refer to targeting the problem directly, for example, developing new skills and seeking support to assist in overcoming the difficulty. Emotion focused strategies are concentrated on managing the emotional effect of a difficulty, for example, engaging in relaxation activities, distraction, and seeking emotional support. Less functional coping strategies include the use of drugs and alcohol, and separation, which may exacerbate existing problems. Endler and Parker (1990) have further identified avoidance focused strategies, of which these latter examples are representative. Clearly a range of different coping responses exist, some more helpful than others. One key finding is the effectiveness of flexibility as an adaptive response to challenging situations (Zeidner and Endler, 1996).

Coping strategies, as defined in the wider literature, share similarities with those described by Breakwell in identity process theory. For example, Breakwell (1986) notes the use of cognitive and emotion focused strategies, e.g. acceptance of change or revision of an existing value. Breakwell also recognises active, passive and avoidant strategies as responses to threats to identity. Breakwell goes further by distinguishing the context in which strategies are employed, i.e. steps taken to reduce threat to the identity structure, in order to maintain the principle of self-esteem, can be aimed at the intrapersonal, interpersonal or intergroup level.

In Berry's acculturation theory (1992), the four acculturation outcomes, i.e. integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation, can be considered as coping responses to the

new culture. These strategies can be related to Breakwell's conceptualisation of responses to identity threat, e.g. an individual may respond to the potential threat of a novel social context by avoidance (separation and marginalisation) or may choose to assimilate and integrate new aspects of the social environment into the present identity (assimilation and integration).

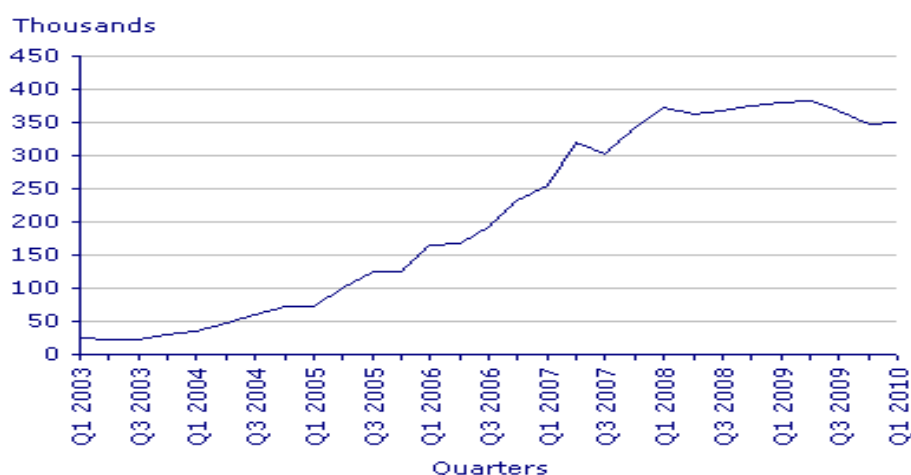
How migrants adapt to the new culture will depend on a range of factors, including the individual's past experiences, motivation, cultural outlook, coping strategies, self-concept/self-esteem, early attachments, preparation, language ability, social support, occupational status and personality factors (Bhugra, 2004). Though personality factors likely play an important role, few studies have identified conclusively, specific traits associated with successful adjustment. Ward et al. (2004) refer to a study from 2000 which focused on Australian migrants to Singapore and measured the 'Big Five' factor model of personality traits, i.e. openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Though they found a strong association between neuroticism and difficulties in acculturation, only a weak association between conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and psychological adjustment was observed (Ward et al., 2004). Whilst not discounting the value of exploring the relevance of personality, the use of personality tests may be problematic, and the Big Five model specifically has received criticism from various sources. For example, it has been argued that five traits represents an insufficient measurement of personality and that significant concepts such as honesty and humour are disregarded (e.g. Ashton et al., 2004). Furthermore, it is contended that the model lacks cross-cultural consensus, and the replicability of the big five model outside the context of Western post-industrialist cultures has been challenged (e.g. Matthews et al., 2009).

Polish migration to the UK

Migration from Poland to the UK can be seen as occurring in three distinct waves (Iglicka, 2001). Though some migration occurred prior to the Second World War, it was during and immediately after this era that the UK received its first significant influx of Poles, many of whom were displaced refugees. The second wave took place during the communist era, which saw a steady trickle of Poles move to the UK. The flow increased immediately following the collapse of the communist regime, when travel restrictions eased. The most recent wave of migration to the UK began on 1st May 2004 when Poland, along with seven

other central and Eastern European countries, collectively referred to as the ‘A8’, joined the European Union (EU), and the UK opened its borders to the citizens of those countries. Of the eight countries that joined the EU at this time, Poland represents by far the largest migrant group with 71% of A8 migrants of Polish nationality (ONS, 2010). Following accession, the number of Polish people moving to the UK grew rapidly and reached its peak in 2007 with an estimated 96,000 citizens migrating. A 2008 survey carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that the vast majority of A8 migrants are aged between 16 and 39, are single, and are in employment (Pollard et al., 2008). The same survey looked at the reasons for migrating and found the main motivation to be economic, though learning English and broadening horizons were also noted as significant factors. According to Home Office figures, the number of Polish people living in the UK rose from 75,000 in 2003 to 520,000 in 2009 (ONS, 2010). Since 2007 the rate of migration from Poland to the UK has declined and settled. This is likely due to a reduction in unemployment rates and increased economic prospects in Poland, as well as strategies by Polish institutions to encourage Poles abroad to return home (Pollard et al., 2008). The graph below (Figure 1.), reproduced from the Office for National Statistics, shows the trend of Polish people in employment in the UK from 2003 to 2010.

Figure 1. Polish-born people in employment in the UK, 2003-2010.



***Source: Office for National Statistics (2010).**

Though the rate of Polish migration to the UK has slowed, Poles remain a significant presence and currently represent the largest foreign born national group living in the UK

(Pollard et al., 2008). Conflicting reports exist regarding whether Poles are returning or staying in the UK, and it may be a few years before the picture becomes clearer (Burrell, 2009). Accurate assessment will be further complicated by forthcoming changes in EU immigration laws. For example, from April 2011 Germany and Austria will grant A8 countries the same access to their labour markets as the UK has done since 2004. Given the closer proximity of Germany to Poland, this may affect migration trends.

Life in the UK

Although most Poles are attracted to London and the South East, recent Polish migrants contrast with previous migrant groups in having ventured beyond the capital in search of work. As Rabindrakumar reported (2008), after examining data from national insurance number applications, Polish people can now be found living in non-traditional migrant areas, including rural settings, and are represented in every local authority in the UK. The focus of this study is on Polish migrants residing in London.

There is evidence of contemporary Polish migrants having successfully integrated into UK society. For example, Burrell (2009) and Eade and Garapich (2009) refer to the development of strong social networks and the preponderance of Polish shops, newspapers and websites. Further evidence of their establishment may be seen in an employment rate of 84% (for A8 migrants), which is nine percentage points higher than for those born in the UK (Pollard et al., 2008). Other positive characteristics ascribed to recent Polish migrants include being highly skilled and highly motivated (Eade and Garapich, 2009). These examples offer a positive portrayal of Polish people in the UK though far from provide a complete understanding of their post-migration experience. A report carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Anderson et al., 2006) found that although employment rates were high for A8 migrants, work conditions were often arduous, including for example, hospitality sector work, and jobs were more likely to be temporary. Pollard et al. (2008) also note the incongruence in the tendency for highly qualified recent Eastern European migrants to be employed in low-skilled jobs. Eade and Garapich (2009) report other challenges faced by Polish migrants including poor housing and a lack of entitlement to welfare benefits. They argue that the government's decision (up until May 2011) to restrict housing and employment benefits only to those accession migrants who had worked for a minimum of

twelve months created insecurity, which may potentially have lead those who were vulnerable and lacking social support to homelessness.

Reception by host community

How post-2004 Poles have been received by the UK population is difficult to determine with certainty. It has been suggested in the literature on acculturation that greater cultural similarity between home and host countries eases post-migration adjustment (e.g. Bhugra and Becker, 2005). Of further note, difference in skin colour between migrants and the receiving community has been associated with increased risk of alienation (e.g. Vazquez et al., 1997). That Polish people are predominantly white and Christian therefore may suggest that the acculturation process is eased, and that threats to identity are minimal.

Fomina and Frelak (2008) in their analysis of the news media discovered reports containing perceptions of Poles ranging from positive and praiseworthy to fearful and threatening. The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (FPGB) appealed to the Press Complaints Commission regarding it's perception of anti-Polish sentiment in certain newspapers, for example, the *Daily Mail* (Brook, 2008). According to a BBC news report, 42 racially motivated attacks were reported by Poles in the UK in 2007 compared to 28 in 2004 (BBC News, 2008). A more recent report in *The Independent* (Silverman, 2009) expressed concerns of the FPGB that the economic downturn had seen an increase in anti-Polish crime, though this was disputed by police representatives.

Polish migrants and mental health

Following Ødegaard's (1932) study of Norwegian migrants (as described above), one of the earliest epidemiological studies in the USA to specifically include Polish migrants was by Malzberg (1963), who concluded that rates of mental illness for Poles living in New York State exceeded those of other foreign born, white immigrants. In the UK, Cochrane et al. (1977) found rates of mental illness amongst Polish migrants in England and Wales to be a third higher than the indigenous population. Similarly elevated levels of psychiatric morbidity have been found in studies of Polish migrants in Australia (e.g. Evert 1996; Krupinski and Cochrane, 1980), and again, a similar pattern can be seen in a recent Swedish study (Blomstedt et al., 2007). How relevant these findings are to post-2004 migrants in the

UK is uncertain. The migrants of these studies represent previous waves of Polish migration and, it could be argued, endured greater hardships, for example, war, poverty, and permanent separation from families, each representing potentially significant sources of stress (Burrell, 2009). The most recent migrants, in contrast, freely move from Poland without having had to overcome many of the obstacles faced by their predecessors. Furthermore, the profile of the most recent Polish migrants differs from previous generations, for example, they are younger and more of them are university graduates (Burrell, 2009). It is helpful to elaborate further on this distinction by providing some socio-historical context. Since 1989 Poland has been a democratic country and since 2004 a member of the EU. During this time the country, through a policy of economic liberalisation, has seen consistent economic growth and increasing privatisation; in essence, becoming more and more like the established capitalist societies of Western Europe, which the UK, of course, represents. It is possible therefore that recent Polish migrants are better equipped, both psychologically and practically, to adapt to life in the UK. Indeed, this was put forward in a recent study by Weishaar (2010), who found recent Polish migrants in Scotland to be highly adaptive.

Despite the significant differences in circumstances of post-2004 Poles, compared to previous generations, there is recent evidence to suggest that the pattern of elevated rates of mental health problems found in earlier migrants from Poland is continuing with the current wave. For example, Lakasing and Mirza (2009) support this view, referring to reports of exploitation, poverty, loneliness and poor physical health among A8 Poles, as some of the factors impairing well-being. According to a report in *The Independent* (Shields, 2008), Polish organisations were witnessing increasing rates of depression and suicide amongst recent migrants. The same article referred to unreleased figures from the Polish embassy in the UK, purporting that 20% of Poles who died in the UK in 2007 took their own lives. Exploring the mental health of recently arrived Poles in the East Midlands, Kozłowska et al. (2008) collected data from 144 migrants using the General Health Questionnaire 28 (GHQ-28) and found that almost half the group presented with symptoms of psychological distress. In the same study a selection of participants were interviewed and associated their psychological difficulties with alienation, lack of social support, under employment, uncertainty about the future, a sense of being caught between two countries, and incongruence with pre-migratory expectations. Furthermore, in an earlier study, Weishaar

(2008) identified elevated levels of psychological stress amongst recently arrived Polish manual workers in Scotland. It seems that general impact of migration for recent Poles is mixed.

Summary and rationale

Migration is a significant life event involving the individual in a complex process of responding and adapting to a new environment. As has been highlighted, the process of migration has inherent stressors (e.g. Bhugra, 2004; Misra, 1992), and compared to the general population, higher levels of mental health problems have been consistently found among migrant groups (e.g. Berry, 1992; Bhugra, 2004; Cochrane, 1977; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Ward et al., 2001).

Though similarly elevated levels of psychological disorder have been found in previous studies of Polish migrants (e.g. Cochrane, 1977; Evert, 1996), suggesting a prevalence of problematic adaptation, the same cannot be said of post-2004 Polish migrants to the UK, due to the lack of extensive research, though small scale studies and anecdotal reports have suggested that recently arrived Poles are similarly at increased risk of experiencing psychological problems (e.g. Lakasing and Mirza, 2009; Kozłowska et al. 2008). Clearly the circumstances associated with the most recent wave of Polish migration, i.e. beginning from April 2004, are significantly different to those of earlier generations, and it may be that current Polish migrants are more prepared and consequently more able to adapt to life in the UK, though this is, as yet, difficult to determine with certainty.

An awareness of the psychological difficulties experienced by previous migrant groups, together with the lack of clarity and understanding of how recently arrived Poles have adapted, provides a strong rationale for exploring their post-migration experiences. Furthermore, the possibility that post-2004 Polish migrants may be exposed to stressors relating to their distinct circumstances is worthy of investigation.

Themes relating to psychological distress have immediate and obvious relevance to the field of counselling psychology, though understanding the process of adaption for those Poles with 'non-clinical' presentations is also relevant. Counselling psychology maintains a broad

interest in all areas of human experience and is concerned with how significant life events and experiences shape one's identity and psychological self. Its application ranges from working with people who are in distress and who present in clinical settings, to focusing on self-development with those who are less impaired. Gaining a deeper knowledge of the processes of adaptation that are relevant for a particular group, e.g. the role of personal and social context, enables counselling psychologists to understand those clients better so that clients can correspondingly understand themselves more fully. In the current case, this involves developing understanding of the specific circumstances surrounding the experience of migration for a group of post-2004 Poles, bringing into consideration relevant recent changes in the political, social, and economic context, and exploring how such factors impact on the individual. This serves as a timely evaluation of the current Polish migrant experience, which is distinct from previous Polish migrations in many ways. It is pertinent that counselling psychologists are informed and up-to-date with all significant factors that may impact on the individuals they are working with.

The most significant and influential research on migration has been in the form of large scale surveys conducted by government agencies assessing population trends, and epidemiological studies assessing the prevalence of psychiatric disorder in specific communities (Burrell, 2009). Such research has been immensely valuable in highlighting patterns of migration and in drawing attention to the mental health needs of migrants. Furthermore, such studies have generated substantial discussion and theory regarding the psychological impact of migration and the processes that may lead to mental health problems.

While the benefits of large scale quantitative research are obvious, there are also limitations. For example, though a broad analysis may highlight important trends, the focus on statistical information is unlikely to provide an in depth understanding of an experience (Guba and Lincoln, 2004). Given the complexity of the migration process and the acknowledged roles of individual factors and social context (Bhugra, 2004), achieving a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is doubtful without having also engaged with the experiences of the individual. Bhugra (2004) refers to the heterogeneity of the migration process and advocates that clinicians and researchers take into account the individuality of the migrant's experience. A qualitative, idiographic approach is designed to access a deeper level of understanding,

capturing nuanced reflections of personal meaning, that quantitative approaches do not permit due to their methodological constraints (Smith et al., 1995; Willig, 2008). Using a qualitative approach this research represents an attempt to understand the processes of migration and the impact on the individual.

As mentioned above, previous research on earlier waves of Polish migration has mainly centred on population and epidemiological surveys, with little attention paid to individual experiences (Burrell, 2009). Regarding post-2004 Polish migrants there is a growing body of research that includes qualitative studies, though it is mainly from the disciplines of sociology, human geography, history and economics (Burrell, 2009). The present study seeks to expand on these, and past findings, by exploring, from a psychological perspective, the processes of adaptation in a sub-group of post-2004 Polish migrants. It is hoped that this will contribute to deepening understanding of the psychological impact of migration for this group, whilst referring to relevant personal and social information, and drawing particularly on identity process theory to help ground and make sense of their experiences. The sizeable community of A8 Poles now living in the UK gives further rationale to the investigation, which will be of likely benefit to researchers, clinicians and migrants themselves.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the aims of the research and provides an overview of theoretical concerns in order to situate and clarify the epistemological and methodological position. A detailed summary of the research procedure is presented and issues concerning reliability, reflexivity, validity and ethical practice are considered.

Research aim

The aim of this research is to explore the lived experiences of a group of Polish migrants in the UK, focusing on those Polish people who moved to the UK following Poland's accession to the EU in May 2004. Whilst essentially an exploration of the process of adaptation, it is additionally concerned with the psychological impact of migration on the individual, how challenges are experienced, and factors influencing participants' experiences of life in the UK.

Research paradigm

Situating the research: An overview of research paradigms in counselling psychology

To obtain a thorough understanding of research paradigms in counselling psychology it is helpful to consider an historical perspective. Psychology was not formalised as a 'science' until late in the nineteenth century under the auspices of Wilhelm Wundt who founded the first psychological laboratory in 1879. This development marked the beginning of an experimental approach in which psychological phenomena were studied in the same way as natural sciences, i.e. focusing on causal relationships and employing prediction and control, with the goal of discovering universal laws (Leahey, 2000). The evolution of psychology as a science, particularly in behaviourism and cognitive psychology, has seen this paradigm develop and become known as positivism. The fundamental ontological concept of there being an objective reality that is knowable through observation and testable by measurement, has remained dominant in contemporary psychological research. The later development of post-positivism is distinguished by its acknowledgment of the difficulties in accessing a true reality, though otherwise retains much of the tenets of the positivist paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005)

Research in counselling psychology, like in other disciplines of psychology, has for the most part followed the positivist tradition. However, over the past twenty years there has been a steady rise in the use of an alternative approach to psychological enquiry, namely qualitative research, which differs from quantitative research in several respects (Creswell, 2003; McLeod, 2001; Woolfe, 2003). Where a quantitative approach is concerned with numerical data, qualitative research is concerned with language. Quantitative research is deductive, i.e. concerned with testing existing theories, whereas qualitative studies are inductive, i.e. concerned with theory building. Qualitative studies are without hypotheses requiring verification or falsification, and have significantly smaller sample sizes to enable a richer, idiographic analysis of a phenomenon. Quantitative research has earned a reputation as a highly credible approach to scientific enquiry due to its rigorous and replicable design, large data sets and generalisability. However, this approach has also been criticised for ignoring the individual, her or his social context, and concepts such as personal meaning (Guba and Lincoln, 2004; Smith et al., 1995).

Where quantitative research is generally associated with a positivist or post-positivist epistemology, qualitative approaches have greater variation and flexibility in their epistemological positioning, which is dependent on the aims of the research and on the philosophical underpinnings of the particular qualitative method employed (Willig, 2008). Thus it is possible for a qualitative study to be epistemologically located anywhere on a spectrum from positivism at one end to extreme relativism, i.e. the view that there are no absolute truths, at the other. Between these extremes lie epistemologies defined by the extent of their acceptance or rejection of these two paradigms.

Of the qualitative methodologies to emerge, ‘grounded theory’, with its hypothesis making and view of reality as objective and obtainable from the data, is epistemologically positioned closest to positivism (Madill, 2000). In recent years different versions of grounded theory have developed, which also emphasise a social constructionist ontology (Charmaz, 2006).

Social constructionism and phenomenology represent two important philosophical and theoretical developments that have strongly influenced methodological paradigms in qualitative research. Social constructionism involves the idea that reality is subjective and

shaped or ‘constructed’ by social phenomena such as history, language and culture. Stopping short of an extreme relativist position, social constructionism asserts the existence of several realities or truths rather than one objective truth (Willig, 2008). Discourse analysis, conversation analysis and narrative analysis are common constructionist methodologies that are associated by an interest in how language is used to construct reality.

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology and is concerned with understanding and describing lived experience, the essence of which is perceived as being accessible via the analysis of narrative accounts. It is epistemologically associated with empiricism, i.e. the idea that knowledge arises from experience (Willig, 2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2008) is a research approach which has its roots in phenomenology, though IPA is also strongly influenced by hermeneutics and social constructionism.

Rationale for a qualitative approach using interpretative phenomenological analysis

The research is concerned with exploring the processes of adaptation in a sub-group of migrants. It attempts to reach this objective by getting as close as possible to the essence of the participants’ lived experiences, by attempting to understand through their eyes, taking into account social and cultural context. Since quantitative methods of research do not permit exploration of personal meaning beyond the measurement of quantifiable entities such as the extent or frequency of an attitude or emotion, they are incompatible with the research aim of the current study.

The research objective, to obtain a *perception* of an *experience*, necessitates a research methodology that is focused on exploring the experiential and one that acknowledges the significance of social and political context in shaping that experience. Though it can be argued that several qualitative approaches share this aim, in interpretative phenomenological analysis this is emphasised (Moran, 2000; Smith, 2008).

IPA’s attempt to ‘get along side’ the experience of the participant is complementary to counselling psychology theory and practice, which places great importance on giving voice to the subjective world of the client (BPS; 2005; Woolfe et al., 2003). Parallels can be drawn

between the relationship of participant and researcher in phenomenological approaches and that of client and therapist in humanistic psychotherapy (a major influence on counselling psychology), in which the therapist's role is one of 'being with' rather than 'doing to' the client (Woolfe et al., 2003). As in counselling psychology, IPA emphasises the diversity and variability of human experience (Eatough and Smith, 2008).

Theoretical underpinnings of interpretative phenomenological analysis

Smith (2008) describes IPA as not strictly a methodology but rather an approach that is guided by a particular ontology and epistemology. Though the approach was developed in the 1990s, the roots of IPA can be found much earlier in phenomenology and in hermeneutics.

The concept of 'experience' in IPA is considered a 'phenomenal reality' rather than a 'direct reality' as the reality of an experience is subjective, not objective (Eatough and Smith, 2008). IPA is therefore not attached to a realist epistemology but rather to an epistemological position in which subjective versions of reality exist. Though social phenomena are understood to be incorporated into a person's version of reality, they are not solely defined by this, unlike discursive approaches. IPA can therefore be considered to be a weak version of social constructionism (Eatough and Smith, 2008). Though it is phenomenological, i.e. the phenomenon is perceived as being accessible both to the person and the researcher, the reality that is available is considered socially contextualised. It is perhaps helpful to understand IPA as lying somewhere between critical realism and social constructionism on an epistemological spectrum.

In attempting to understand a phenomenon Smith (2007) argues that it is impossible to do so without making an interpretation. IPA therefore brings together two traditions of accessing knowledge, i.e. the descriptive (phenomenology) and the interpretative (hermeneutics). In IPA an analysed description of reality represents an interpretation by the person recounting the experience, and a further interpretation by the researcher engaging with the data in attempting to understand it. This can be referred to as a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith, 2007).

This highlights the significance of the researcher's role in the research process and in the construction of meaning. Qualitative approaches, unlike quantitative, positivist methods,

acknowledge the potential influence of the researcher's values and experiences on the findings. Discussion of this phenomenon and how it is managed is referred to as reflexivity (McLeod, 2001). Smith et al. (1999; 2007) advocate a transparent approach in which the researcher makes it clear how his or her experiences shape, and are shaped by, the research process. Indeed this forms an integral part of the interpretative journey. Approaching the study of phenomena, a qualitative researcher will be influenced to some extent by pre-conceived ideas regarding the topic of enquiry. This issue is likely to be of particular relevance in the current study which seeks to explore the experiences of people whose cultural background is quite different to the researcher's.

Smith (2008) recommends small sample sizes for IPA research since the aim is to explore phenomena in detail. Adopting an idiographic approach the researcher is able to obtain a richer understanding of the material, which goes some way to ensuring the validity of the research (Ponterotto, 2005). With small sample sizes, immediate generalisability is unexpected. Though this may be seen as a criticism it should be understood in the context of IPA's epistemological underpinnings, which perceive the study of experience as the starting point for understanding human beings (Eatough and Smith, 2008). Generalisability is made possible by the accumulation and convergence of related studies of small sample sizes. Although this process is slow it can provide a richer, more humanistic and potentially more reliable understanding of a phenomenon.

Method

Participants

Given the focus of the research on the most recent wave of Polish migration to the UK, only those Polish people who had migrated to the UK since Poland's accession to the EU in May 2004 were eligible to participate. Additional eligibility criteria included a minimum twelve month residency in the UK by the time of the interview. This was to ensure that participants had some experience of living in the UK and had had a chance to digest the experience of their surroundings. A further criterion was that participants were able to converse comfortably in English, as a decision was made that no interpreter would be provided. This decision was based on a consideration of the extra level of complexity that employing an interpreter may have brought. Bearing in mind the double hermeneutic inherent in IPA, as

referred to above, it was thought that an additional layer of interpretation might require an extended analysis and point of discussion beyond the scope of this research. Instead, interviews were conducted in English, acknowledging the possible limitations of expressive ability. Finally, an age criterion of 18-40 was implemented. The decision to limit the focus to younger Polish people was made in order to introduce age-related homogeneity since it was considered that the experiences of older generation Poles may be influenced by significantly different factors. Furthermore, this age bracket is representative of the typical age of post-2004 Polish migrants to the UK (Pollard et al., 2008). Small sample sizes are encouraged in IPA in order to achieve depth rather than breadth (Smith, 2008). Accordingly, eight participants were recruited. All participants were fully conversant in English. All bar one of the participants were female. Table 1. below provides basic demographic information for the group:

Table 1. Participant group demographic. (Pseudonyms are used).

Participant	Age	Employment status	Relationship status	Length in UK	Educational attainment
Danuta	30	Accounts assistant	Single	4 yrs	University
Anna	27	University administrator	Single	3 yrs	University
Ewa	33	IT Professional	Single	3 yrs	University
Pawel	27	Support worker	Single	3 yrs	University
Magda	23	Volunteer worker	Single	1 yr	University
Barbara	31	Executive assistant	Single	4 yrs	University
Monika	29	Trainee/assistant psychologist	Single	5 yrs	University
Kasia	22	Student/nanny	In relationship	3 yrs	University

Procedure

The initial phase of data collection involved conducting a pilot interview in order to test out the interview schedule and to make any necessary revisions. The participant, Magda¹, was recruited through word of mouth. Following this, a research flyer was designed [Appendix 1] and placed on notice boards in Polish shops, churches, Polish cultural centres, and in local libraries, all in London. After several weeks without a single response, alternative methods of advertisement were considered. A combination of word of mouth and advertising on university bulletin boards provided four people, and an advertisement in a Polish psychology interest group's newsletter provided the three further participants. On receiving a request of

¹ Such was the richness of Magda's account, it was decided to include her interview in the main sample.

interest, participants were contacted by the researcher and arrangements were made regarding the time and location of the prospective interview. Six of the interviews took place during the summer of 2009, one occurred in January 2009, and the pilot interview took place during the summer of 2008. An interview room was made available within the School of Psychology at the University of East London campus. If this was inconvenient for participants, care was taken to ensure that the location, in which interviews were conducted, was in appropriate surroundings, i.e. emphasising privacy, comfort, quiet, and freedom from distraction.

Data collection

Data was collected through individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, conducted by the researcher. Before the interview commenced, participants were informed of the nature of the research and were asked to provide consent. The interviews were carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines described below. Basic demographic information was collected, i.e. age, employment and relationship/family status. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and the average length of interviews was approximately one hour. All interviews were followed by a debriefing period in which participants had the opportunity to ask further questions and to discuss their experience of participation.

The interview schedule [Appendix 4] was designed to facilitate rich reflections and to encourage participants to talk freely about their migratory experiences. A flexible, open interview style was applied in order to allow the interview to develop naturalistically so that unexpected themes were permitted to emerge. The interview schedule served as a guide rather than a list of questions to be strictly adhered to. The implications of this approach encompassed occasional drifting away from the schedule, which was rationalised as maximizing potential for exploration and enabling the interview to develop in unanticipated directions.

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher [Appendix 9]. Though it was understood that this would likely be a time consuming process, it was decided that completing this independently would benefit the analysis by increasing engagement with the participant's lived experience through re-living the interview. This action was also considered consistent with being 'committed' to the research, a characteristic identified by Yardley (2000) as a measurement of validity, as discussed below.

Analysis

IPA is conceptualized more as an approach than a prescriptive, step-by-step method for analysing data (Smith, 2009). The overarching guiding principle is a commitment to understanding the lived experience of the participant by attempting to make sense of the individual's perspective (Reid et al., 2005). This is achieved through an inductive and iterative process, whereby the researcher engages in a dialogue with the data as the analysis develops, moving from the descriptive to the interpretative. The outcome of this process is the researcher's interpretation of the participant's sense-making, i.e. the double hermeneutic, which offers a tentative understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.

Though there is no set way of carrying out an IPA study, a number of procedural strategies that encourage meaningful engagement with the data have been suggested, (e.g. Smith et al., 1999; 2009). These suggestions were followed by the researcher and are presented here in a series of stages.

Stage 1

Analysis began by reading and re-reading the first of the interview transcripts. This process enabled the researcher to become immersed in the material and each new reading brought further reflections which were noted down in a research diary [Appendix 6]. After reaching a point of familiarity and a felt sense of coherence of the whole transcript, reading began again, this time paying close attention, line-by-line, and making notes in the left hand margin. As suggested in IPA methodology literature (e.g. Smith et al., 2009), initial note making was organised by focusing on three different aspects of the material, namely 'descriptive', 'linguistic' and 'conceptual', each identified using a different coloured pen. Descriptive comments refer to factual, 'first-level' aspects of the participant's account. Linguistic comments represent notable use of language, for example, increased emphasis, hesitation and use of metaphor. Finally, conceptual comments refer to any reflections, interpretations or questions prompted by the researcher's reading of the participant's description. Keeping the three concepts in mind whilst attending to the text helped maintain a close analytic engagement.

Stage 2

The second stage of analysis consisted of generating themes and noting these in the right hand margin. This process involved encapsulating the comments made in the initial stage and identifying the essential meaning of a section of text, whilst referring to its context in the transcript as a whole. The process of achieving understanding by relating to both the particular and the whole reflects the hermeneutic circle (Smith, 2007). In accordance with IPA, themes that were developed went beyond the descriptive in attempting to attain a deep and meaningful understanding. An interpretative approach was applied, encouraging a reflection of the conceptual relevance and the psychological implications of the particular section of transcript, and involving the researcher's professional knowledge and personal response, and linking this with the text. An example of this process is provided in the appendices [Appendix 7].

After completing this process for the whole transcript work began on organising the emerging themes. The themes were written on separate pieces of paper and spread out on the floor. The spatial perception of this suggested technique (Smith et al., 2009) facilitated a strong sense of how themes were linked together and this assisted the grouping process. As the stage evolved, themes were collapsed, discarded and merged until a sense of coherence was reached. This was formulated into a table of super-ordinate themes and related sub themes, with page and line number references linking relevant extracts from the transcript. As with earlier phases of the research, reflections on this process were noted in a research diary.

Stage 3

After the first transcript was completed the same strategy was applied to the next case. In order to respect the idiographic commitment, notes were made in the research diary in an attempt to bracket off potentially contaminating thoughts generated from the analysis of the initial transcript. Additionally, a concept was kept in mind from the British psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion, who recommended approaching each therapy session as a first meeting “without memory or desire” (Bion, 1967). This was helpful in encouraging a fresh approach to each subsequent transcript.

Following the application of this process to each transcript, eight tables of themes were generated and these were laid out on the floor to provide a visual representation for the whole group. Reflecting on connections and patterns, similarities and differences, slowly led to grouping, organising and relabeling and eventually to the gradual development of a master table of themes, an excerpt of which is provided in the appendices [Appendix 8]. Throughout this process, emerging themes were discussed and reflected on with research peers and in supervision in order to maintain analytic legitimacy.

Validity

Good research incorporates steps to ensure that the quality of the data is high. This process is frequently referred to as validity checking and in quantitative research a number of methods for assessing validity have been developed. Applying the same criteria used in quantitative research in qualitative studies is problematic due to the epistemological differences between the two paradigms (Smith et al., 2009). In response to this problem, Yardley (2000) suggests four characteristics of good qualitative research, namely, ‘sensitivity to context’, ‘commitment and rigour’, ‘impact and importance’, and ‘transparency and coherence’. Sensitivity is demonstrated through careful management of each stage of the research, for example, encouraging openness by putting participants at ease and actively listening during the interviews, and cautiously attending to the interview transcripts so that the analysis appears closely attuned to the experience of each participant. ‘Commitment and rigour’ refers to the importance of doing justice to the research by being fully engaged with it and adopting a thorough approach to the design and procedure. ‘Impact and importance’ concerns the value of the research, for example, challenging previously held assumptions, or transforming policy or health care practice, or contributing somehow to a larger body of research. Finally, ‘transparency and coherence’ refers to the overall clarity of the study, whether the research aims fit with the methodology and epistemology, and whether the reader is able to follow the research in a logical manner. Transparency also refers to the need for the researcher to be open, showing the reader every step of the way, and demonstrating reflexivity, i.e. the influence that the researcher’s personal perspective and epistemological position have on shaping the research (Willig, 2001). Since it is acknowledged that both of these elements may inevitably contribute to the construction of meaning in qualitative methods of enquiry (e.g. Nightingale and Cromby, 1999), it is important that such

influencing processes are in the awareness of the researcher and are made clear in the write-up (Smith, 2007). Steps taken to maintain reflexivity included having regular consultations with my research supervisor, sharing ideas with research peers, and keeping a research diary in order to note reflections occurring during the whole course of the research process, from pre-data collection to write-up. Additionally, a reflexive statement was developed and is presented at end of this chapter, in order to elucidate my personal relationship with the research subject. I have used the above principles as guidance throughout the research in order to ensure quality and validity. It is hoped that these characteristics are evident both implicitly and explicitly in the thesis.

Ethical issues

The research was conducted within the ethical codes of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2006) and the University of East London. The well-being and safety of the participants was paramount. No participants were contacted before approval for the study was granted by the School of Psychology's research ethics committee. Interested participants were firstly provided with an information sheet [Appendix 2] providing an outline of the research and clarifying details of their requirement, i.e. an individual interview of around one hour that would be audio recorded. On the same sheet it was stated that participation was voluntary and confidential and that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Upon meeting with participants the same information was verbally discussed and space was provided for any questions or to discuss any concerns in order that participants felt at ease before proceeding. Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form [Appendix 3] before beginning the interview and their readiness to proceed was clarified verbally. They were encouraged to speak freely and were informed that they could stop the interview at any time. Interviews were conducted in a sensitive manner. At the end of the interview, space was given for participants to reflect on the experience and to ask any questions of the researcher. A debriefing form was given, clarifying the research aim and providing some background to the study [Appendix 5]. Though it was unexpected that the interview topic was likely to provoke distress, a list of crisis helplines was provided, including one with an interpreter service, in case difficult emotions were aroused. Audio recordings were kept in secure computer files to be erased at the end of the research. Names used on transcriptions were anonymised in order to protect the identity of participants.

Reflexive statement

The intention of this statement is to provide some background to my interest in the research topic and to declare that which may be considered relevant to readers. I do so in an attempt to be transparent, and to contribute to the overall validity of the study. Why Polish migration? I am a white male, born and raised in the UK. Prior to beginning the research I had no specific connection with Poland or Polish culture. I have however had some exposure to migration and for a long time have had an interest in foreign cultures. My mother migrated from Ireland in her early twenties, and before coming to psychology I gained a degree in modern languages and worked overseas for six years. I have been attracted to the idea of living in foreign countries and I have enjoyed my personal experiences of migration, but I recognise that my experiences are my own and I am curious about how migration is perceived by others. I am aware, from the literature, that migration can be stressful and I am drawn to this field with the hope that the findings may benefit migrants, researchers and clinicians. The high profile of Polish people in the UK and the lack of research exploring the current experiences of this group, were the main reasons which led me to focus my research on this topic.

Analysis

An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the eight interview transcripts led to the development of four master themes and eleven subordinate themes:

Master Themes

1) Relating to Poland

- i. Freeing self from Poland
- ii. Attachment to Poland
- iii. Tension and conflict

2) Relating to the UK

- i. Valuing openness
- ii. Feeling disconnected

3) Impact on self

- i. Personal challenge
- ii. Personal development

4) Adaptive ability

- i. Personality factors
- ii. Previous experience
- iii. Language matters
- iv. Coping strategies

Each master and subordinate theme is presented below using quotations taken from the participant transcripts to illustrate the researcher's findings.

1) Relating to Poland

A significant portion of participants' descriptions of their experience of migration concerns their relationship with Poland. The three subordinate themes attached to this master theme represent the main perspectives to emerge from the data regarding this subject. Participants

hold both positive and negative views of Poland. Positive perspectives are closely associated with family attachments, which are identified by the researcher as contributing to pressure to return to Poland.

Freeing self from Poland

The sense of Poland being experienced as a constraining society, that inhibits individual growth, is a strong theme to emerge from the study. This is expressed by all eight participants and is referred to as an important motivating factor in the migrants' decision to migrate. For example, Kasia² describes perceiving Poland as restrictive and rigid:

...Poland is such a pessimist country [LAUGHS]. It's kind of like, and it's very kind of like, there's, I think there's more opportunities in England and er in Poland I kind of felt like er there are certain ways that everyone goes and you have to go that way, there's not much choice in what you can be, what you can do, so, I don't think I kind of felt that I could do, that I actually possibly, realistically do something that I wanted to do. (Kasia, 3: 97-102).

The sense of restriction is described by Kasia as originating from a perceived national attitude of pessimism and by a societal inflexibility. Danuta describes a similar sense of restriction and constraint, linking it with the power of Polish political organisations:

...I start realising that it is hard in Poland, there are still the same people with, with a social mindset who might, you know, block me because yeh I'm working for the European Institution but someone is telling me, well if you don't join the 'blar' political party then you're not going any further... (Danuta, 15: 673-677).

In its broad sense the theme of constraint is inclusive of a range of perspectives and experiences. A perception of Poland as being intolerant of difference and lacking openness is frequently mentioned by participants. Ewa provides an example of feeling stifled by Poland's homogeneity, something which she feels unable to tolerate for prolonged periods:

I can't be there for too long because the society is so homogenous, you know, it's just one type of people, everyone thinks the same, everyone looks the same, and if you, I don't know, if you, even, if you would wear something different, you'll be like, 'what!', you know, they, you wouldn't feel accepted...(Ewa, 5: 202-206).

² Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect participant anonymity.

Here there is a sense that individual freedom of expression is constrained by cultural norms and expectations. Inherent is a suggestion that to adopt a position outside of societal convention is to risk being ostracised. Magda continues with this theme, linking the sense of a repressive homogeneity to Poland's communist past:

...because we were under communism for so many years and I, I think like sometimes Polish society is like a grey mass, like everyone is the same, everyone does very similar things and, and if you find a job, y'know, you should do your best to keep this job and not change it because it's not good. (Magda, 8:322-325).

A different example of constraint is provided by Barbara who describes a sense of being constrained in employment opportunities due to gender discrimination:

In Poland it's completely different, er, it's hierarchy everywhere, women sometimes are discriminated, not everywhere but the tendency is rather, you know, if you're a woman it's difficult to find a job or more difficult to find a job. (Barbara, 5: 202-205).

Pawel uses powerful imagery of confinement in expressing his experience of feeling trapped in Poland. His description of being stuck on a trajectory offers a sense of the inflexibility and lack of opportunity that he experienced of his native country. In migrating to the UK it is as if he is freeing himself from his imagined prison:

I wasn't happy in the city. I felt that I'm just, you know, I'm just, too much I felt like in prison. I just seen my future like straight line and, so this was the main er feeling, just to change it. (Pawel, 1: 4-7).

This is one of the more evocative descriptions of participants' experience of constraint when relating to Poland. It offers a succinct portrayal of an experience that is observed across the sample group and provides an understanding of the motivation to migrate as a means of escaping and liberating oneself from the perceived constraints of Poland. Participants express a range of different experiences of constraint regarding Poland. It seems that in each example there is a sense of personal freedoms being inhibited, and migration can be seen as a reaction to these circumstances.

Attachment to Poland

Despite the prevalence across the sample of negative perceptions of Poland, specifically regarding the inhibition of personal freedoms, all participants, except Kasia, describe a strong attachment to Poland. A dominant component of this attachment appears to be principally connected with relationships with family and friends. Although Pawel refers to feeling at times like an outsider in Poland he also describes a close connection with family and friends and he describes a strong bond with the physical landscape. It seems that there exists a sense of attachment to Poland that transcends all criticism of the homeland, for example, Monika remarks:

Poland annoys me right, and it's...but I feel at home. (Monika, 3:118).

In the following quotation Monika describes a sense of a prior attachment she experienced to Poland, using the image of an 'umbilical cord'. She describes what might be perceived as an unhealthy attachment as she explains how it felt necessary to break the cord, by migrating to the UK, in order free herself and to allow her own identity to develop. This idea is closely linked with the previous theme:

...although I wasn't living with my parents for a good few years and I was living in a different place of Poland, but there was still this umbilical cord, what do you call it, the kind of...and I, I think that not before I came here, it just, I just had to do it to actually just get some sense of identity really... (Monika, 3: 103-107).

Anna refers to her sense of home being in Poland, evidencing the strong bond that exists between her and her country of origin. She understands this attachment as relating to the significance of her family:

Of course it is and will be always, my family's there. (Anna, 4: 166).

In Anna's response there is a sense of certainty that the powerful link with Poland will remain as long as her family is there.

Danuta provides a more detailed understanding of the experience of her relationship with Poland, specifically emphasising the importance of her family, which is perceived as of greater value than any success she may experience in the UK:

It's still home yeh there are friends that I er share experiences with life so this is...erm yeh so erm... Well I want to go back there because erm I would like, I would like to have my own family, I have to have my own children in Poland and er and I have two brothers, one of them will be getting married soon and then they'll have children so I don't wanna be erm, I want to be, I don't want to be unknown person for their family and er my parents will need my help one day or my grandma who still lives there and might need my help and er, I want to value those relationships even more than a good job here. (Danuta, 14: 633-638).

Magda describes a sense of attachment that causes her to miss Poland, and she refers to the importance of her friends:

Magda: I think there is always something in your er home country that you miss even if you are here so...

Researcher: What kind of things would that be, do you think, if you could name them?

Magda: Erm, I think people erm, I, I miss my friends a lot. (Magda, 9: 374-377).

The excerpts and comments above provide a sense of the profound nature of attachments that participants hold towards Poland. At the same time as voicing their discontent and dissatisfaction with life in their native country, the majority of participants describe a strong and robust connection with Poland, which they associate with their relationships with family and friends. Only Kasia differs in the lack of attachment she expresses towards family in Poland, which appears to relate to an individualist outlook:

I'm more individualistic in my way of thinking, or more career oriented rather than family oriented. (Kasia, 4: 173-174).

Tension and conflict

Following the experiences presented in the previous two subordinate themes, it is unsurprising to find that half of the participants describe experiencing tension concerning the idea of returning to Poland. Again the role of family appears as a significant factor. Experiencing pressure to return whilst simultaneously perceiving Poland as a constraining society results in an uneasiness, which several participants describe. Anna captures this succinctly:

I'm sort of, you know, I'm torn, one, one foot, one leg in Poland and one is here. (Anna, 19: 849).

The evocative use of language communicates a sense of the discomfort associated with being pulled in opposing directions. Barbara similarly refers to a tension between her obligations towards her family and the independent life that she desires and has developed in the UK. She describes the close bond that she has with her family and acknowledges experiencing feelings of guilt due to a sense of not fulfilling obligations towards them:

I feel that I'm, I think I'm missing on something, erm, my relationship with my parents is very strong, erm I think they do need me and it's kind of sometimes a sense of guilt that maybe I shouldn't be here, erm, maybe I should be with them, but in the other hand I think it's my life (Barbara, 4: 176-179).

As highlighted in the previous section, Danuta is clear about her intentions to return to Poland in order to be close to her family, to not miss out, similarly to Barbara, and to have children. Though the intention to move back to Poland seems clear, Danuta goes on to acknowledge the potential difficulties inherent in that decision, thus revealing a tension:

I would prefer to be in Poland but, you know, when I stop fantasise, you know, about my wonderful life in Poland and I start realising that it is hard in Poland. (Danuta, 15: 672-674).

Monika describes a tension around deciding where to live in the long term. Though she describes wanting to stay in the UK and not wanting to return to Poland, at the same time she feels reluctant to consider retiring or being buried in the UK. Since neither option is satisfactory, it appears that she is left with the feeling of an uneasy dilemma:

I'm in two minds about it because both options seem not very appealing, so, if I think about having my, like being buried in England, you know, like if we're talking, I wanna stay here I don't feel like going back there but then I think, 'is this the country I wanna be buried in', like, I want, I wanna like, I don't know, retire'? And I don't think so, but then I think, 'do I wanna go back to Poland'? And the answer is 'no' because there's not much I have there. (Monika, 5: 225-230).

Family obligations and a sense of belonging represent two important factors which several participants describe as pulling them back to Poland. Despite the significance placed on family, all participants describe a tension linked to the idea of moving back, which is likely

related to the sense of constraint that they associate with the Poland that they may be returning to, as referred to in the first theme. Where lives with fewer constraints have been developed and to some extent normalised during their time in the UK, it is perhaps understandable that thoughts of returning to Poland might include trepidation regarding potential loss of personal freedoms.

2) Relating to the UK

Participants' ways of relating to the UK differ depending on which aspect of their UK experience they are referring to. Their descriptions fall into positive and negative categories, which are organised into two main subordinate themes, valuing openness and feeling disconnected.

Valuing openness

All participants describe valuing the experience of openness in the UK, which may be heightened in response to the feelings of constraint associated with Poland. Openness is described in various ways, for example, participants refer to experiencing tolerance, flexibility, optimism, and a sense of freedom and opportunity in the UK. Examples of such experiences are abundant throughout the group. Magda refers to the sense of opportunity and describes how it has contributed to her becoming more open-minded and engaging more with life:

...in Poland we used to, we used to say, 'you have to do this, you have to do that', and here it's 'you *can* do this' and you know, you have another opportunity and if only you want, and it's more about focusing on yourself, your needs, and I think it, it gave me a lot of courage, you know, for explore many things so I participated in many trainings and yeh I think I became, I've become more open-minded in myself. (Magda, 7: 312-317).

Magda goes further in offering an understanding of how she values the sense of freedom she experiences in the UK and how she believes this enables her individual needs to be met:

And here, you know, you're so free so you can change job if you want, whenever you want, er, and, so it's a different sense of freedom as well, that you can, you know, focus on your er individual needs here and I think it's, it's being appreciated here a lot. (Magda, 8: 325-328).

Kasia describes in a similar way how the freedom and opportunity she experiences in the UK enables her to fulfil her ambitions, which positively influences her mood:

I mean, to be honest, if I wouldn't come here, I wouldn't, I wouldn't have a degree that I actually enjoy, I wouldn't actually er, I wouldn't have met my boyfriend, I wouldn't have met my friends, so actually I think everything has changed and yeh I think I'm much happier person now, much, I feel like my, actually I, like I'm fulfilling my needs, I'm actually, you know, like making my dreams come true, yeh. (Kasia, 5: 206-211).

Ewa describes living in the UK as an inspirational feeling that nurtures her creativity:

...whenever I go away and I come back, I was like, I breathe in the air and it's like, wow, there is this kind of creativity, inspiration somewhere around. I don't know, it's just something really special, I really like it. (Ewa, 3: 116-119).

The powerful imagery used by Ewa of 'breathing in the air' gives a sense of embracing and embodying the special atmosphere. Ewa goes on to describe the features that make up that special place, including cultural centres and the attitude of the people. Again there is a sense of embodiment and also nurturing in the imagery of 'feeding' on cultural offerings:

...you're surrounded by really nice things, you have all the museums, galleries, all the places where you can go to and can sort of feed on interesting stuff, and also people you meet and erm just yeh. I think people basically are really nice and just not yeh, I don't know...just open, nice and yeh. (Ewa, 3: 125-128).

Barbara refers to valuing openness in describing her experience of tolerance in the UK, which she compares to Poland. She describes how this positive experience strongly influenced her decision to stay in the UK, signalling the importance she attaches to this characteristic. Of further relevance is the difficulty she imagines of returning to Poland, which she associates with diminished levels of tolerance:

I didn't experience any discrimination of my, I dunno, gender, erm background, ethnicity, nothing like that, religion, so it was really great experience because I think Poland is very, very intolerant country, so I felt very welcome here when I came and I think this is what helped me to make the decision to stay, definitely, probably the main factor. If I felt discriminated I wouldn't be here, I'd prefer to go to my country but because people are very tolerant, this is what I like, so probably this is what I would miss in Poland. (Barbara, 5: 221-227).

An aspect of openness that participants refer to and value is the experience of warmth and friendliness, particularly from officials. Similarly to previous examples, it is likely that this positive experience is heightened by the contrast of participants' experiences of dealing with officials in Poland. Describing his experience of managing bureaucracy, Pawel regards this as much easier in the UK due to, as he perceives, the friendlier people:

Well there's a kind different culture here, which I really appreciate. There is more culture, 'nice to be nice', and in Poland it's, I am official and you are, you want something. (Pawel, 3: 125-127).

Pawel and Danuta refer to a culture of mistrust and suspicion in Poland, which makes trusting others difficult. This is contrasted with their experiences in the UK, for example, Danuta perceives the cordiality of officials as a distinct and appreciated experience:

...a lot of people are nice and we think that they are nice, but they're just doing their job, but this is ok, this is ok, this is how it should be, 'cause there shouldn't be all those negative people who want to exploit other people. (Danuta, 8: 358-360).

Valuing openness is also referred to by half of the participants when describing their appreciation of diversity in London. Ewa attaches much importance to this experience:

...the best thing about London for me is erm the mixture of people that is here and I, I find it surprising how this all can work, you know, how all these people can function sort of in one place and just, just enjoy sort of, you know, I perceive it as enjoyment. (Ewa, 5: 198-201).

Inherent in Ewa's enjoyment of diversity is a sense of liberation. It is likely that this is enhanced by her perception of life in Poland as stiflingly homogenous, as mentioned earlier, when she refers to the constraints she experienced there.

Anna describes valuing being part of a diverse community. It seems that for her, London's diverseness provides her with a sense of belonging, of not standing out because of her 'non-Britishness'. By normalising diversity she is defying a sense of herself as outsider and thereby validating her inclusion within UK society:

...maybe there's just something to do with London, because there are so many different people from literally all over the world, so actually you sort of merge, you disappear, you're just part of, you know, colourful London, erm, you're just, you're just, you know, part of it. (Anna, 8: 363-366).

Anna also describes valuing being exposed to a culturally diverse population because of the learning experience she gains from this:

Actually whenever, whenever I think of any country in the world, and I just walk down the street, and I think to myself, and I just think er it's very possible I'm actually meeting person from, you know, Burkina Faso, for instance, you know, just, just walking down the street, especially living in Brixton. So erm, I just, I just like it, I just like the place. It really opens my mind, broaden, well broaden my horizons and er I'm really thankful for that. Erm my friends back in Poland, I really have great friends and they, before they, they used to ask me erm, when are you coming back? And now they ask me, are you coming back? (Anna, 3: 130-137).

Anna links the significance attached to this experience to the increasing connection she feels with the UK, a relationship shift that her friends in Poland observe. For all participants the drive to feel free to pursue and to be able to realise ambitions is of great importance and is central in the decision to migrate. Since all participants describe having the experience of living in a society in which one feels relatively uninhibited to function and to develop according to one's individual needs, it is understandable that this would lead to an increased connection with that society.

Feeling disconnected

Though valued positive experiences are clearly apparent amongst the participant group, six participants describe experiencing a feeling of disconnection and report missing closeness, which they associate with living in the UK. Monika refers to this disconnection in distinguishing between Polish and British concepts of friendship, where Polish friendship is perceived as being more profound, and British more superficial:

...here people kind of describe as friends basically everyone you know and sort of go for a pint, you know, or erm, well in Polish, 'friend' is, is a word that kind of translates, the term we use as 'friends' is really kind of someone you confide in, someone's close to you, someone you can rely on, and the kind of, most of the, what British people call as 'friends', we would use the

term 'acquaintances' or something like that, or I don't know, colleagues or, so...(Monika, 6: 255-260).

In addition to conceptual differences of friendship, Monika considers a perceived aloofness of British people as contributing to her sense of disconnection:

I think that there is something about different way of maybe socialising. Erm, maybe there's something about English people...I, I don't really think that, it's like, this is a brilliant country to come here because I don't, like I said, there's not much kind of negative attitudes, but at the same time people aren't that really kind of interested and, it's like indifferent outlook I would use, is the word that comes to my mind. (Monika, 7: 280-285).

In Monika's description there is a sense that a different form of socialising exists that, for her, inhibits the development of social relationships. Danuta provides a similar experience and offers a sense of the closeness she misses in relationships with work colleagues:

...we sometimes go to pub after work and, you know, we have fun, we laugh, yeh it's ok but it's just this level of more intimacy, just the level of where you build a friendship, it's just that I'm, I'm, I just don't go there. It's just the level, polite level. (Danuta, 9: 378-381).

Magda refers to her experience of missing the connectedness of friendships back in Poland. Again, people in the UK are perceived as different:

I miss my friends a lot and I think it's, it's kind of different quality of relationship in Poland and here. I mean here I met plenty, many, many people, but there are only few that I can, you know, talk very openly about things and problems I have er because English people I think this kind of, kind of attitude that they are not very willing to talk about your problems and I'm, I'm, I think I just got used to in Poland, you know, to talk about everything with my very close friends. (Magda, 9: 377-382).

It seems plausible that as a result of Magda's maintenance of close relationships in Poland, her ability to make friends in the UK is inhibited, as she reports:

...because I have my friends in Poland and if I have problems I, I call them, so maybe, if I was on my own and I didn't have my friends in Poland I would, you know, be more open to different people. (Magda, 9: 402-404).

In a similar way, in Barbara's description of her difficulties in making friends and connecting with others, she acknowledges the role that her cautious attitude potentially plays in the isolation she experiences:

Yes, in the beginning it was difficult to find, or to open up myself to people, to look at people I would say because everyone was little bit isolated. However, it's, again, people were very friendly, I think it was my attitude towards them rather than their attitude towards me. Erm, maybe I was afraid of, you know, completely opening up myself. Also because London is a huge place, you never know what to expect, you don't know who these people are in clubs and restaurants so erm I think yes it's erm, I have been a little bit cautious and I still I don't have a huge, huge amount of friends, erm but I do make an effort. (Barbara, 7: 287-294).

Danuta describes missing having someone she can connect with at work. For her, not feeling connected to her colleagues means she is unable to express her true feelings, which she feels obliged to cover, as if wearing a mask:

I wish I had someone there that I can just say my comments about how the work there is organised or, how the people or how the building or just how I feel. I wish I had someone like that there but I don't have. So I'm going there with just a mask on my face and, and it's really hard because... (Danuta, 11: 472-476).

Of those participants who describe difficulties connecting with others in the UK, communication and language are highlighted as being significant factors in the struggle they experience. The perception of language as a barrier to connecting seems relevant for most. Pawel offers a concise description of how language difficulties, particularly in the beginning, had a negative impact on his social life:

When you are here it's starting to be really lonely because er, first you cannot speak. (Pawel, 14: 612-613).

Magda describes the frustration she experiences around not being able to express herself fully:

I think it's quite easy to learn English like on a basic level but when it comes to the point when you want to talk, you know, issues, your feelings and emotions, it's really frustrating because emotions are so specific and you

really need to know vocabulary to, you know, describe what you feel inside and, I, I struggle with this problem all the time. (Magda, 9: 396-400).

Danuta refers to a less obvious aspect of language that contributes to the loneliness she feels at work. She describes experiencing uncertainty around navigating the nuance of language and communication, with regards to social rules. Being the only Eastern European there likely compounds the frustration of not feeling able to communicate more naturally:

I feel bit like lonelier or I, you know, I feel er, like at work there's no other I would say Eastern European migrant there, there's no other, it's just me and then just British people and, you know, it's, it's nice to talk but I want to say more but I don't know what I can say, what not, if it's appropriate or if it's not. (Danuta, 6: 264-267).

An obvious experience associated with feeling alienated is xenophobia and three participants refer to this phenomenon. Two participants describe sensing an awareness of anti-Polish sentiment in certain newspaper publications and in the advertised views of a political party. Pawel describes an incident of being directly threatened by a stranger after being heard speaking Polish with a friend. According to the three participants' responses, it seems that initial feelings of surprise and anger were fleeting and it appears that the significance of such incidents was minimised on account of their rarity and due to their inconsistency with a general experience of feeling welcomed and accepted, as Pawel describes:

I was like, it's nothing serious, it can happen everywhere and no, yeh, how is it now, it's I think it's erm yeh it's, it's hard to say better because it was ok before. I just said maybe it seems now because I said quite a few situations it was difficult but it wasn't, as I said, it was really, what I felt, it was really hospitable, friendly and nice society here. (Pawel, 8: 347-351).

Though most participants describe valuing politeness in the UK, two people refer to their experiences of British politeness as disingenuous, which they perceive as a barrier to connecting with others. Monika wonders whether politeness inhibits the development of intimacy between people, due to true feelings being prevented from emerging:

Maybe, see, maybe then this is the reason why I sort of, why there's this distance because I'm sort of used to this kind of rude people in Poland which then, it's again, it's weird but then because there those, like people clash more often because they are so rude to each other, then there's, the friction causes

also like, there's more chances for like building some, I don't know, intimacy or something, but here because it always sort of like slides under the surface, it's really difficult to, I don't know, to connect. (Monika, 4: 151-156).

Monika refers again to this sense of disconnection experienced in the UK:

I think really what, what's been difficult, I think the price for the freedom was feeling alienated. (Monika, 3: 116-117).

As Monika mentions so succinctly, perhaps one of the prices of freedom and opportunity, provided by migration, is the experience of alienation, as alluded to by six of the participants. As described in the quotations above, feeling disconnected is understood as originating due to language and cultural communication difficulties. Additionally, cultural differences regarding politeness and friendship are referred to as contributing to the experience of disconnection. The experience of xenophobia appears rare and anomalous to participants' general experience, which perhaps explains its apparent negligible impact.

3) Impact on self

Participants' descriptions of the impact of migration on the self fall into two main categories, and are labelled personal development and personal challenge. Though treated separately, there are points where these two subordinate themes overlap, for example, where personal development results from overcoming challenge. Experiences of personal development and challenge are represented by participants in equal amounts.

Personal challenge

Personal challenges related to migration are described by all the participants, though they seem more pronounced for some. It appears that occasional experiences of isolation and alienation constitute the main forms of challenge. An important source of such feelings is the sense of disconnection that is referred to above in the master theme, 'relating to the UK'. To avoid repetition, the researcher suggests that the reader refer to this section and keep in mind the main points, i.e. missing closeness, cultural differences, and language and communication difficulties. The personal challenges represented by the experience of tension and conflict are similarly referred to above in the master theme, 'relating to Poland'.

Aside from the personal challenges related to the above two master themes, six participants describe struggling with feelings of self-doubt and a sense of inferiority. Magda reveals how comparing Polish and UK economies led to feelings of inadequacy early on, which inhibited her assertiveness and ability to speak up for herself:

I wish I had more courage to speak about issues at the beginning and, you know, I accepted many things even if I didn't like because I was in a new culture and I had this way of thinking that, oh, you know, I'm, I come from Poland and, you know, there are people here who make great money and, you know, even if they don't make good money here, if you compare to Poland, it's still good money, so, you know, it's...if someone doesn't know where Poland is I, I started feeling, oh so, yeh I, my self-esteem was really low at the beginning because of my background. (Magda, 12: 514-520).

The perception of a Polish sense of inferiority, related to economic background, is reiterated by Ewa, who refers to a 'complex' that exists in the Eastern European psyche:

I guess it's erm, you know, it's, the more east you go, the more complexes people have, in a way. Er, must be something to do with the status of the country and kind of financial status as well, also the fact that er, ok we come here always for work, not as tourist, you know, it's like, hmm, yeh, this things make you feel a bit kind of hmm, yeh. (Ewa, 8: 329-332).

Kasia refers to a self-doubt that she experiences which affects her confidence. Though she does not link this to a Polish cultural attitude at this point, her perception of Poland as being pessimistic, as observed above in the master theme, 'relating to Poland', may relate to her difficulties acknowledging positive traits in herself:

I think I don't recognise my strengths and I don't recognise my, my abilities, so I think it could do more with like, more optimistic way of, you know, seeing things. (Kasia, 6: 255-257).

Danuta describes feeling insecure and uncertain about her ability. Inherent in her description is a sense of dependency on others for self-validation, representing a vulnerability:

I don't even know what I'm worth really because even if I'm just doing a data entry jobs and I'm good at it and, but I don't have a chance to see if I would be good at more responsible jobs. And I feel that I could be ok but it's just that I didn't have that test just to, just to show, just to prove to myself that, that I

would be alright with more responsible jobs. So, so it's er together but with this integration in terms of er socialising with people and also in seeing my career here in the UK which is blocked because er, erm, I don't know what they think of me. (Danuta, 7: 284-290).

Of possible further relevance is Danuta's level of employment. Equipped with a university degree, it is questionable whether data entry constitutes appropriately fulfilling work, which possibly characterises a lack of confidence and self-belief.

Aside from commonly experienced challenges inherent in moving to a new location, such as searching for employment and making friends, several participants describe experiencing additional problems with communication, cultural differences, isolation, obligations to Poland, and a sense of inferiority that is associated with Poland's cultural and economic background, which contributes to a lack of confidence. Together such experiences appear to represent significant challenge, however, the overcoming of such difficulties is closely linked to personal development.

Personal development

All participants describe numerous ways in which they perceive migration as having significantly contributed to their personal development. It seems that the experience of migration, and of being a migrant, represents an opportunity for personal growth. Participants refer specifically to developments in confidence, learning, maturity, and openness. Pawel describes feeling very aware of a change in his attitude, becoming more open and less suspicious of others, which he ascribes to living in the UK. In the first excerpt he reflects on the process of change, from first coming into contact with openness to eventually embracing it:

I was suspicious at the very beginning, later on I, I understood it, and afterwards I liked it and now it's changed me so it's natural for me to be more open... (Pawel, 18: 809-811).

Additionally, he mentions how this change of perception remains when he is back in Poland, suggesting the extent to which this process has become internalised:

I can see that I'm different and much more open, for example, on the street in my native country, or wherever I'm going, much more relaxed, much more taking this culture from here. (Pawel, 18: 801-803).

In a similar way, Monika describes experiencing personal development by way of adopting what she perceives as a cultural characteristic:

I think I was very, I was much more like impulsive in Poland and I think in, I don't know, impulsive but I've calmed down really and there's this more sense of being at peace here, and I do think that it's, it's, you know, it's partially because of the fact that people here seem like calm. (Monika, 10: 448-451).

Barbara provides numerous examples of personal development. Here she describes becoming more open-minded and tolerant of other cultures, and attributes this to the experience of living in a cosmopolitan society, something which she particularly values about living in London:

Barbara: I think that in general, living abroad erm opens up your mind a little bit. So I became more tolerant perhaps, erm...

Researcher: Yeh, in what way?

Barbara: Just not criticise people and accepting other cultures. I was quite, because I wanted to yes see something different and because London or England in general, or this region, let's say, is very cosmopolitan. That is why erm I think, hmm, it gives you better insight of what are other people's lives, let's say, so I've probably, this is another thing what I would miss in Poland, this, let's say, multi-culture, multi-cultural society and erm diversity. (Barbara, 6: 256-264).

Magda refers to significant developments in her learning, specifically regarding gaining knowledge of other cultures as a consequence of her experience of living in a multicultural community:

I get to know many things and, you know, I, I'm really interested in different cultures and I think London gives you the best opportunity to get to know about different cultures by experience. You know, it's not like you read a book and you learn by heart as well, ok population, you know, and something. So it's, I think it's really interesting and it has changed me a lot. (Magda, 11: 468-472).

Half of the participants associate their experience of migration with a process of maturation, as described by Barbara:

I just feel better with myself I think. I think I grew up, became more mature probably. (Barbara, 10: 419-420).

Kasia refers to maturity when talking about her experience of growing accustomed to typical signifiers of developing responsibility, for example, employment:

...getting used to actually having a job 'cause I haven't had a job before in Poland so actually getting used to having er, er, having to go to work every day, sort of stuff like that (Kasia, 2: 58-60).

Though several participants describe experiencing instances of self-doubt, as reported in the previous subordinate theme, seven of the eight participants interviewed describe developing in self-confidence as a consequence of migrating. Significantly this is frequently linked to the experience of overcoming challenges. Anna refers to this process and provides an example from her early experience of arriving in London:

...we just, you know, just set out for London, and it was quite frightening, now, now when I look back, I think my goodness, that was actually, that very moment was actually, that very day I was actually quite brave because we didn't have a place arranged, a place to stay, we didn't have a job and then we were fine in two days, so actually that was big, big exam and actually we passed it. (Anna, 21: 951-955).

Inherent in her description is a retrospective awareness of the extent of the challenge and its associated anxiety. Also present is a sense of accomplishment, referring to the experience as an exam that she and a friend both passed.

The idea of personal growth resulting from the experience of challenge, is also referred to by Barbara who describes overcoming challenges as a strengthening experience:

I think it made me feel stronger, er because I suffered from, all my life I think, and still suffer probably, to some extent, but less, to less extent, erm of very low self-esteem so probably it helped me to have faith in myself that I can manage without help. I think this was the, the most valuable thing that I learned or the most important one. (Barbara, 6: 242-246).

Within Barbara's description is a sense of the personal importance that is attached to overcoming difficulties. It seems that migration for Barbara offers many potential rewards, not least, improvements in her self-esteem.

The significance of personal development such as increased openness and self-confidence can be observed in the rich descriptions presented above. Though practical gains associated with migrating to the UK, for example, increased employment opportunities, improved language skills, and greater economic rewards, are noted, developments occurring on a more personal level are likely to be more meaningful, particularly where such change has become internalised, enabling the emergence of new, beneficial perspectives, culminating in increased self-esteem. Again, the relationship between overcoming challenges and personal development is noteworthy.

4) Adaptive ability

The ability to adapt is of crucial significance to how participants respond to the experience of migration. Four subordinate themes were identified, constituting the different ways in which adaptation is construed. According to the analysis of the participants' descriptions, the effect of migration is strongly influenced by personality factors, language skills, relevant previous experience, and coping strategies.

Personality factors

A number of personality traits appear relevant to participants' ability to adapt. Since each participant describes enduring some form of difficulty or uncertainty at some stage in the migration experience, it is reasonable to acknowledge that each member of the sample possesses an amount of resilience. Particular personality traits that are especially significant in contributing to adaptive ability are identified as openness to experience, flexibility, empathy, independence, motivation and optimism.

A strong sense of openness is apparent amongst seven of the participants and is evident in various forms. Magda directly links her perception of herself as being open, to her ability to adapt:

I think, I was really, I, I've always been erm been open to new experiences so, it was, London is a place for me that I can really explore and discover many things. So, and, I would say, I have to say I, I've adapted quite easily so... (Magda, 8: 362-365).

Anna acknowledges her openness and describes this characteristic as serving her in life generally:

I think I do come across as a very erm, er very open and very, very positive person, I, well I hope so, and I think it helps, I think it helps in life. (Anna, 6: 266-267).

Ewa reflects on openness in referring to her attitude of flexibility, which enables her to manage uncertainty effectively:

I think I adapt really quickly to new situations, maybe because I don't have expectations, like I don't know, it's like, if I come to a new place I don't have kind of, oh this is going to be like this, this is going to be like that, or I read it's going to be like this, no it's not, it's going to be totally different and, and I'm enjoying it, and the more different it is the better really, so yeh. (Ewa, 4: 167-171).

The sense of flexibility that Ewa refers to is evident in six of the participants' descriptions. It suggests both an ability to tolerate uncertainty and a proactive approach to problems. Pawel and Magda both refer to experiences of work which illustrate their willingness to be flexible in tolerating discomfort:

I found this kitchen job but after one month, six weeks I started to be bored there and after two months it was really tiring for me but I still stayed there. (Pawel, 6: 255-256).

And:

I really struggled with a great problem, but you just need to get used to it. (Magda, 3: 122-123).

A specific personality trait that seems to support a person's ability to tolerate difficulties is empathy. Four participants illustrate this capacity in empathising with the host population. For example, Ewa takes into consideration the perspective of the other when reflecting on the difficulty in meeting new people:

I think you will feel it in any place where you come to when you're new er, well I feel it, that, you know, everyone else has already, have their net of friends and they don't have this need for making new friends, so obviously er, when I'm a new person I have to make most of the effort to sort of, you know, make contacts. Erm so yeh I can understand this and it's nothing er about English people or any, anyone else really, it's just normal, you know, people who have grown up er here have had their lives here, their own friends and stuff, they know what they're doing in their free time and when you're new you have to somehow fit into it. And erm, for this, my strategy is well, I could sort of start erm like making loads of effort and start bothering people and calling them, what are you doing tonight or something? I don't like it because I'm kind of aware that it just takes time wherever you are really. (Ewa, 5: 213-224).

Ewa's ability to imagine the perspective of others provides her with an understanding of the dynamics of meeting new people and joining social groups. This rational appreciation for the situation she finds herself in allows her to maintain a balanced perspective, guarding her against developing unhelpful, personalised interpretations.

In response to the interviewer's question about how he felt when others were irritated by his lack of English skills, Pawel, drawing on past experiences, refers to how his ability to empathise helps diffuse what might otherwise be interpreted negatively:

First of all I, I understood it because I just, as we were doing this whole self-development stuff, we just trying to, you know, we were doing, it was kind of friendship play, before we started but we were taking the different roles and I be this person and you be this. So I think this helped me a lot. (Pawel, 4:153-156).

Similarly, as shown in Ewa's excerpt, it is apparent that an empathic understanding enables difficult situations to be tolerated more easily.

Independence is observed to be a beneficial trait in participants' ability to adapt. Ewa's comfort in her own company enables her to cope with periods of being on the outside of a social group:

I don't always have to be with people, if you know what I mean, like I can, sometimes I like being just aside and just sort of observe people, it's kind of more interesting for me, than to be the part of the group. (Ewa, 5: 224-226).

Kasia refers to an autonomous approach to problem solving, which incorporates a sense of self-efficacy:

If I had a problem I always just go on Internet and just look up, you know, what I'm, what I need to know, I try and find out as much information as possible but, prior to making some decisions. (Kasia, 2:64-67).

Though independence and self-sufficiency are generally considered positive characteristics, Barbara refers to an over-independence that may in some ways be problematic:

Barbara: I don't want to be reliant on someone, I want to be independent and, you know, I don't want to owe anybody any favours, erm, I think it's, this is how I am. Erm...

Researcher: So you're fiercely independent then?

Barbara: Yes but maybe too much sometimes but I, I like help people but I don't always accept the help because erm it makes me feel that I'm maybe not clever enough or that I have to be, to rely on someone and I don't like this feeling. So even though I experienced difficulties I didn't tell anybody about that. (Barbara, 4: 144-151).

Barbara describes feeling fearful of asking for or receiving help as she associates this with acknowledging herself as inadequate.

A trait shared by all eight participants is a strong sense of motivation. This is manifested through examples of determination and ambition and is likely fuelled by a range of factors.

Anna describes her desire to progress as being central to her life values:

I just really want to, you know, move forward, move on all the time because I think, that's, that's life, just to, you know, change, change, just to be ready, you know, for next achieve, achieve goals, set goals and then achieve them. (Anna, 12: 538-541).

Magda similarly refers to how motivation is linked to her identity:

I don't like to give up very, you know, quickly. (Magda, 3: 110).

Barbara describes being motivated by a need to validate her self-worth through attainment:

And I think that if I'm stressed I'm motivated and, well the part of personality that yeh I have to prove myself that I can do things so maybe this helped me to some extent. (Barbara, 11: 474-476).

Five of the participants refer directly to an optimistic attitude as enabling them to overcome setbacks and remain focused on achieving their goals. In response to a question from the researcher about what helps make her migration experience successful, Ewa replies:

I think in general I'm, I'm quite optimistic about stuff. (Ewa, 3: 124).

Pawel refers to an optimistic approach to problem solving where he describes perceiving difficult experiences as opportunities for learning:

I think my...I think my way of thinking, just to think not about things like er, like difficulties, but as a chance to do something. (Pawel, 9: 389-390).

A positive attitude is reflected in Anna's approach to finding work when she first moved to the UK:

I used to say well, let's give it a go, see how it goes. If, if you can't find a job, you know, give yourself two months, er sorry, two weeks, three weeks, up to a month, if you still can't find a job, ok then you can, you can honestly, you know, say, say well I, I wasn't, well I couldn't find a job, there was no job, there were too many people, you know, different, er different, many different factors actually affected that. It's not, obviously it's not my fault, I tried hard, and then you can, you know, off, off you go, back to Poland. (Anna, 6: 234-240).

Inherent in Anna's self-talk is a strong sense of encouragement. Additionally it seems that providing she tries hard she gives herself permission to return to Poland with her honour intact, should her search for work prove fruitless.

As illustrated above, a range of personality factors appear relevant to participants' ability to adapt to the migrant experience. Characteristics of openness to experience, flexibility, empathy, independence, motivation and optimism all emerged from the analysis as commonly occurring themes. Though the frequency and extent of examples of each trait differ across the sample, it seems that where they are apparent, they are beneficial to the process of adaptation.

Previous experience

Participants refer to a range of experiences prior to migration that have likely relevance to their adaptation to life in the UK. Five participants refer to an earlier positive socialisation to migration by way of family members having migrated or having spent time abroad themselves, or to prior experience of interacting with people from other cultures. Barbara describes a family history of migration, referring to her grandparents who were refugees. There is a sense of migration being normalised in her world view:

It wasn't uncommon in my family to move or change places. (Barbara, 11: 481-482).

Anna refers to an early experience of being abroad, which awakened in her the idea that migration was a possibility:

It actually made me, maybe this very strange, maybe it was very, well to me it was a big discovery, that actually people, there is a big, big world and people live there and they're happy and er I can do the same. Actually I thought to myself that I can do the same. (Anna, 10: 430-433).

She later gives an example of being specifically motivated to join the EU, suggesting an existing inclination towards 'the West':

I'm not into politics, I really, I try to stay to the side really, however I took part in er, in elections to European Union, European Union elections. (Anna, 24: 1083-1085).

Besides the benefits of early exposure to migration, seven participants describe directly preparing for migration, for example, by researching and arranging employment. Additionally, Monika describes a mental preparation in:

I think I was preparing to actually to live abroad erm, I don't know, since I was ten maybe [LAUGHS]. Erm and I think I always carried these yeh notions like, you know, it would be really cool to live somewhere else (Monika, 1: 32-34).

Indirect preparation is also evident in some participants' accounts. For example, in the previous section on personality factors, specifically regarding empathy, Pawel describes

nurturing his empathic ability in a self-development group he participated in prior to migrating.

From the participants' accounts, previous experiences relevant to adaptive ability consist of both direct and indirect preparation. Exposure to migration whether personally or by proxy seems also relevant, and is referred to by all apart from one of the participants.

Language matters

All participants had attained good levels of English and it is clear that language plays an important role in their ability to adapt to the experience of migration. This is further evidenced by six of the participants who strongly advise Polish people, considering moving to the UK, to learn the language. Danuta expresses this significance most succinctly, whilst referring to the consequences of lacking language ability:

...the language really matters, language. It's just something that erm, that's, that's really, the language is the thing that er is crucial for living in a different country, even if someone is shy or not open or, but if they can just er go to the GP themselves and just can read the paper, and have, and speak in a job, then this is crucial but er, so I'm, I'm really, I'm like sad because of the people who doesn't know English and they are struggling. (Danuta, 21: 929-934).

Danuta describes the basic functioning that being able to speak English provides. In her description is a sense of the profound restriction experienced by those without language skills.

Anna, talking about her own success and the success of her friends, attributes this to the ability to speak English:

...they did find jobs, they spoke, you know, they spoke English, and I think that was the main thing really. (Anna, 6: 243-244).

Monika describes her ability to express herself in two languages as empowering a greater understanding of the world:

...if a language is like a set of tools or kind of a way of thinking about the world or expressing and stuff, so I can now can have two boxes instead of one. (Monika, 11: 482-484).

Pawel makes an association of increased ability in language and communication with a greater sense of well-being:

I feel really, really lucky, erm even better because I can communicate much easier. (Pawel, 8: 358-359).

Anna refers to her early interest in studying English, offering further evidence of a prior inclination towards western culture:

It was always my dream to improve my English, to speak better English. (Anna, 1: 16).

The significance of participants' English language ability is obvious and supported by the above excerpts. The benefits of language skills are described in practical terms, for example, increasing employment opportunities, and in psychological terms, for example, increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy. English language ability may also signify an early inclination towards the UK and 'the West'.

Coping strategies

It is observed from the analysis that methods applied by participants in coping with the experience of migration fall into three categories, which are defined as problem focused approaches, social support and cognitive strategies. An example of a problem focused strategy can be seen in the above theme of personality factors, in the section on independence, e.g. Kasia's proactive, information gathering approach to problems. Though the use of all three coping approaches is evident, social support and cognitive strategies appear particularly prominent. Regarding sources of social support, all participants refer to using friends and family, both in Poland and in the UK. As Anna succinctly explains:

It is very comforting for me to have the group of people around me, to be surrounded by people. (Anna, 21: 930-931).

Friends and family in Poland represent a significant source of support for seven of the participants. The distant physical separation is overcome by the use of modern technology, as Monika exemplifies:

I think that what supported me or what helped me survive is Skype and wireless broadband. (Monika, 8: 334-335).

The sense of having security and support back home seems to provide reassurance, which likely reduces anxiety associated with uncertainty. For example, Pawel remarks:

I know that I have, you know, the family which can support me if I will have any trouble here. (Pawel, 3: 99-100).

Inherent in Pawel's comment is a sense of having a safety net to fall back on. The idea of perceiving a safety net is apparent for five of the participants. Similarly to the above excerpt, Magda's awareness of having a family member nearby as a form of insurance, likely enables her to tolerate risk and insecurity to a greater extent:

I have my cousin here as well so I met him er, from time to time, and I always knew that he's there, he's here so I, I, I can count on him any time I need but, so it was another kind of support I get. (Magda, 3:133-135).

Linked with the concept of a safety net as a source of support, is the concept of a secure base. This appears to have significance to participants' ability to manage the anxiety of uncertainty. Again referring to Magda, she describes returning to Poland briefly following an experience of being burgled. In her description she conveys a sense of using a secure base to return to, in order to receive reassurance, so that she can continue to explore the less secure environment of London:

...after the burglary I decided to go back to Poland for one week, and after that, you know, I had strength to come here and continue my project. (Magda, 4:139-140).

As well as using Poland as a secure base, it is apparent that participants, particularly during the early phase of migration, attempt to create secure bases in the UK. For example, all but one of the participants had pre-arranged to begin their migration by joining friends, an organisation, or a family, in the case of an au pair, each of which provided basic security, such as, accommodation. In Ewa's description below, there is a sense of the importance of having somewhere from which to safely explore, which perhaps offers an idea of the significance that developing a secure base has for participants:

I know that erm, you know, I can stay at my friends house for a bit and look for jobs and stuff. (Ewa, 2:50-51).

An additional method of coping, apparent for seven of the participants, is the use of cognitive strategies, for example, reframing, normalising, minimising and rationalising, all of which promote a psychological robustness. Describing how she coped with the experience of factory work shortly after arriving in the UK, Danuta displays use of a cognitive strategy in reminding herself of the likely impermanence of the situation.

Danuta: ...after like couple of weeks time my head was like, oh come on you're worth more than that, you can do something else.

Researcher: What did you say to yourself then when you felt that?

Danuta: Erm...that, that erm it is temporary and I'll go home and I'll do my career then. (Danuta, 3:124-128).

Magda exhibits an ability to rationalise in perceiving her experience of difficulties as a normal aspect of life:

Of course bad things as well, but it's a part of life so it can happen anywhere. (Magda, 4:159-160).

Pawel displays similar strategies, as can be seen in his evaluation of an incident in which he was threatened by a stranger, referred to above in the master theme, 'relating to the UK', under the subordinate theme, 'feeling disconnected':

I know this is 5% of my situations even less, 1% so this is like situation that can happen everywhere so it's not really a big deal. (Pawel, 7:298-300).

Anna provides a succinct example of employing cognitive strategies when she describes a method of challenging the validity of potentially harmful, critical comments from others, by distinguishing between objective and subjective reality:

If someone tells you, it will happen in your life, it will happen in your life, the people will tell you you're useless, you can't do anything properly, whatever, whatever, you can't even follow the simplest er procedure and so on and so forth, and then of course it hurts, of course it's not nice to hear, but then give yourself ten seconds, and think, whatever I'm hearing, whatever this person is telling me is just this person's opinion, it doesn't mean it's a fact because it's

not objective, because it's that person's opinion so it's subjective. (Anna, 22: 970-976).

A cognitive strategy employed by half of the sample, that is relevant to the pre-migration phase, concerns the role of expectations. These participants describe actively avoiding expectations, prior to migrating, which appears to serve as a preventative to disappointment. One example can be seen in Ewa's description of being flexible in the above section on personality factors. Below, Kasia describes tempering her expectations, acknowledging the likely challenge involved in migrating, which conceivably prepares her well:

There wasn't er much of a shock like when I, I didn't kind of like come here with expectations they would be er, that it would be great and I, it would just be like, 'wow', I actually knew that it was going to be quite hard. (Kasia, 2: 76-79).

As can be seen from the above excerpts, there is significant evidence of helpful coping strategies amongst the majority of the sample, utilising social support, problem focused and cognitive methods to aid the process of adaptation. Only one participant refers to what might be considered a dysfunctional strategy. Though Barbara clearly values her independence, her tendency to keep her problems to herself may represent a psychological vulnerability:

I don't always accept the help because erm it makes me feel that I'm maybe not clever enough or that I have to be, to rely on someone and I don't like this feeling. So even though I experienced difficulties I didn't tell anybody about that. (Barbara, 4: 148-151).

Discussion

The aim of this study has been to explore the experiences of migration and processes of adaptation in a group of Polish migrants in the UK. In the discussion that follows, the four master themes and associated subordinate themes are presented in the order as they appear in the analysis. Each theme is considered with reference to the extant literature, paying attention to instances of convergence and divergence, and attempting to develop a meaningful and coherent understanding of the analysis in the wider context. This is followed by a consideration of theoretical and clinical implications, limitations of the study, and reflections on possible future directions.

Relating to Poland (Master theme 1)

Freeing self from Poland

Reflected in all eight participants' descriptions is the sense of freedom experienced in moving to the UK, which is contrasted with a felt sense of constraint regarding their lives in Poland. For some this feeling of constraint is linked with Poland's traditional, conservative values and its homogeneity, all of which are perceived by several participants as inhibiting their ability to fully express themselves. For example, Ewa describes how dressing differently could lead to ostracism. Poland's conservatism has been reported elsewhere, for example, Bernstein, writing in the *New York Times* (2006), refers to Warsaw's decision to ban the annual gay pride march in 2005, and he emphasises the dominance of the Catholic Church in Polish society. Barbara describes feeling constrained in her career in Poland by a perception of the Polish workplace as engaging in gender discrimination, which, it has been argued, has become more prevalent in Poland's post-communist period (Williams, 2011). Other participants refer to feeling constrained by the perceived limited economic and employment opportunities, and by an inflexibility in Polish administrative systems and work settings, resembling the cultural legacies of Poland's highly bureaucratic and hierarchical past. Furthermore, Kasia describes feeling restricted by a rigidity and pessimism inherent in Polish society. Though participants differ in the experiences of constraint that they refer to, they are united by a motivation to feel less restricted in their lives.

The process of being driven by an inner aspiration can be further understood by consulting the literature on motivation and well being. In the field of humanistic psychology, Maslow (1943) proposes a theory of human motivation, consisting of a hierarchy of needs, where basic needs are represented by those that are essential to survival, such as food and shelter. He suggests that once lower order requirements are met, humans look to further opportunities to enhance their lives and self-esteem, for example, by finding meaningful relationships and purposeful work. The ultimate stage of the hierarchy is described as 'self-actualisation' and refers to achieving the potential of what one is capable of. Another proponent of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers, describes a similar concept in 'the fully functioning person' (Rogers, 1963). Rogers puts forward several characteristics that constitute this form of being, including the notion of being free in order to be oneself. Returning to the experiences of the participants, the motivation to migrate that is evident in their accounts can perhaps be understood as a proactive response to the feelings of constraint they describe of the home country. The conservatism that they associate with Poland may be construed as an inhibitory external factor that must be overcome if they are to live according to a true sense of self.

Though Maslow's and Rogers' theories of human motivation appear thematically appropriate and help accentuate the importance of the individual pursuit of self-esteem, an important consideration is their theoretical context, which is problematic. For example, both theories are ego-centric and were developed in the context of twentieth century North American, white, middle class society. The applicability of Maslow's hierarchy outside of this context is uncertain and the theory has received significant criticism for its assumed universality. Further criticism has focused on its lack of consideration of the role of social context (e.g. Gambrel and Cianci, 2003). Hence, the applicability of Maslow in the current study is challenged.

Given this criticism, rejecting Maslow's theory may seem sensible. However, it is argued that its inclusion is relevant and serves to emphasise an important point. Whilst acknowledging the theoretical problems of Maslow's ego-centric, mono-cultural perspective, it is argued that his motivation theory is made applicable in the current study as it demonstrates and supports the contention that participants have become socialised to a western, post-industrial social

context, and have internalised an individualist societal perspective into their identity structures.

The idea that participants are motivated to migrate, partly as a way to enhance their self-esteem, can be further understood from the perspective of identity process theory. It is suggested in IPT that individuals are motivated by four guiding principles, i.e. self-esteem, self-efficacy, continuity and distinctiveness. Threat to identity activates a response that is intended to maintain these guiding principles. Normally such threats occur when an individual encounters a social context whose structure contrasts with the individual's existing identity structure. In the case of the participants it appears that the identity threat originates not from the new culture but from the old, as evidenced by the accounts indicating that participants migrate because they perceive Poland as threatening to their self-efficacy and self-esteem. It is argued that participants' perception of Poland, as constraining, is strongly influenced by the societal changes taking place in Poland since 1989, which represent a shift towards westernisation and its associated values such as individualism. The participants, as the first post-communist generation, having incorporated such values into their identity structures, find them incompatible with the entrenched, ethno-centric structures of the Polish establishment, thus leading to identity threat.

Though Poles in the UK are generally referred to as economic migrants it is notable that none of the participants cite their primary aim of moving to the UK as being for economic reasons. Instead the factor most closely associated with their motivation to migrate appears to be to gain a greater sense of freedom. Whilst acknowledging the economic reasons behind many Eastern European migrants' decisions to migrate (e.g. Rogers, 2010), it is evident that not all Poles are solely motivated by financial incentives. As is apparent in the analysis, migration may represent for some an opportunity to live in a more liberal society or to broaden horizons, thus constituting an 'experiential migration' rather than an economic one. That not all post-2004 Polish migrants correspond to the 'economic migrant' category has been highlighted elsewhere (e.g. Pollard et al., 2008). It is evidence of the group's diversity and emphasises the importance of treating cases on an individual basis and avoiding applying convenient general assumptions.

It seems that participants experience the leaving of Poland as a form of escape. Indeed Pawel uses the image of being in prison to describe the sense of constraint he experienced in his native country. This perception of the country of departure may benefit the migrant during the post migration phase, as suggested by Tseng (2001), who associates migrants' feelings of escape, with increasing the likelihood of a more rapid and successful acculturation process in the new society. For the participants in this study, migration is related to freedom and optimism for a better life. It is possible that the depth of these feelings of aspiration further enhances migrants' chances of successful adaptation. For example, in the literature on motivation and self-determination, intrinsic motivation, i.e. that which stems from inner drives and aspirations is contrasted with external motivating factors, e.g. money. Numerous studies have found that people who are intrinsically motivated have higher productivity levels and have more successful outcomes than those who are extrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

Attachment to Poland

Though participants' motivation to migrate is partly associated with a dissatisfaction with life in Poland, a strong attachment to the birth country remains evident for all apart from one member of the sample. The focus of this attachment is family and friends, which possibly reflects the importance of social bonds, which may be emphasised in collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2001). The significance of healthy relationships with family and friends has been widely acknowledged in the literature as being strongly influential in psychological health (e.g. Aked et al., 2008). Parallels may be drawn with Bowlby's theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969), which considers the *form* of attachment or relationship with significant others as intrinsically linked to the personality and mental well-being of the individual. Van Ecke (2005) explores the experience of migration from an attachment perspective and remarks that migrants may experience distress associated with separation from attachment figures. She suggests that distress regarding separation may emerge gradually as the migrant becomes increasingly aware of missing out on important life events such as births and weddings etc. Van Ecke (2005) concludes that lack of involvement, or involvement from afar, may lead to isolation, multiple losses and complicated grief reactions to the death of loved ones.

Additional perspectives of attachment are present in Monika and Kasia's descriptions. Monika's use of imagery in the 'umbilical cord' to describe her connection to Poland, suggests that for some, migration may represent an opportunity to break away from an unhealthily close bond to attachment figures, in order to progress towards psychological maturity. This process is consistent with Maslow's concept of 'self-actualisation', which requires a breaking away from any form of constraint which prevents the true self from emerging (1943). Monika's disinclination to be buried or to retire in the UK offers an understanding of her strong cultural identification with Poland, which may ultimately transcend her criticisms of the country. At the same time she is reluctant to live there, suggesting that attachment to Poland for some is experienced more in symbolic terms than practical. Kasia appears to have a less close bond with her family, perceiving herself as more career focused than family focused, which likely explains the lack of attachment to Poland that she portrays.

Whilst attachment theory can helpfully illustrate the depth of participants' relationship with Poland, its use here is problematised by its realist epistemology. Bowlby's theoretical paradigm was empirical, based on direct observations of children interacting with their mothers. This perspective contrasts with post-modern understanding which takes the epistemological position that empirical methods such as observation are unreliable due to their lack of consideration of wider perspectives such as the role of social context, researcher reflexivity, and the subjective world of the individual.

Whilst acknowledging the potential difficulties of attachment theory, the underlying concept, i.e. that bonds between others are significant and may differ in strength according to individual circumstances, offers important understanding of some of the processes which may influence how identity is shaped and how it affects an individual's responses to new experiences in the social world. In this sense, attachment theory, though epistemologically contrasting, may be appropriately incorporated into identity process theory.

Tension and conflict

The simultaneous holding of positive associations with life in the UK together with a strong attachment to Poland, makes for an uneasy alliance and is expressed by half of the

participants as a source of tension. Participants' use of imagery to describe this experience evokes a powerful sense of feeling torn between two opposing desires, i.e. the pursuance of personal freedom, and the nurturing of close family bonds. Though participants value their migration, they concurrently value their relationships with family and friends in Poland. The two positions are unable to co-exist to equal extents since pursuing personal freedoms in the UK means that connections with Poland are weakened. Hence, participants are left, caught in the middle, unwilling to relinquish either of their valued positions. This process may be understood as an inner conflict. Carl Rogers understands intrapersonal conflict as occurring where an individual's desire to self-actualise clashes with the values inherited from the individual's parents (2004). In the current study, self-actualisation may be represented by participants' desire to stay in the UK and, for example, to pursue a career, which possibly contrasts with the values of their parents' generation for whom family obligations were prioritised. From the perspective of identity process theory, the tension experienced represents a conflict within the identity structure. The maintenance of self-esteem, distinctiveness and self-efficacy is dependent on the individual's ability to pursue personal interests. However, this conflicts with the ability to adequately maintain that part of identity structure that is associated with keeping close family bonds, thus resulting in intrapersonal tension.

Schwartz and Bardi (1997) conducted a cross-cultural study, comparing the values of individuals across different Eastern and Western European countries, hypothesising that basic human values were influenced by the political system operating in the individual's society. They found that people living in communist societies were likely to place more importance on values such as conservatism and hierarchy, and were likely to place less significance on values such as personal autonomy and egalitarianism. This may have particular relevance for the participants of this study whose values and consequent identity structures may diverge from their parents' as a result of the different political climates in which they grew up, since by the time the participants reached adulthood, Poland was no longer a communist country. A probable source of tension therefore is the apparent clash of values. The issue of gender may be of further relevance here. For example, Dion and Dion (2001) explored the significance of gender in migration experiences and suggested that the sense of obligation towards family may be heightened for female migrants. Tensions

experienced may also lead to feelings of guilt, for example, Barbara describes feeling guilty for not being available to attend to the needs of her family. At the same time she wrestles with the contrasting view that she should be entitled to live her own life, thus highlighting the impact of opposing values on the individual.

Besides the values associated with family obligation, it is evident that participants are additionally drawn back to Poland by the need of a sense of belonging, provided in family and friend relationships. Paradoxically, it can be argued that searching for a sense of belonging, is what drew participants to the UK in the first place, based on the descriptions of their perceptions of Poland as constraining and oppressive. In this sense, a further tension is highlighted since moving back to Poland may involve sacrificing one form of belonging for another.

It is likely that the tension, represented by the inner conflict between differing values, will remain as long as the factors pulling the participant back to Poland, i.e. family, and the factors keeping the participant in the UK, i.e. personal freedom, are present. As the length of time spent in the UK increases, and participants become increasingly accustomed to the sense of freedom that they refer to, it is possible that the prospect of returning to Poland becomes increasingly difficult. In an article in a Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Praca*, (2008), Aneta Zadroga reported increasing prevalence of mental health problems amongst Poles following their return to Poland after several years in the UK and Ireland. The article refers to difficulties that some Poles have in readjusting to Polish society following an extended period abroad, and mentions the impact of differing societal values and conventions that migrants may have appreciated in the host country but which may differ in Poland. Such differences may contribute to the reluctance to return to Poland that participants experience, since they may fear the psychological consequences of having their new found sense of freedom invalidated. In theoretical terms this can be understood as representing a threat to identity and it is likely that such a scenario would challenge the maintenance of IPT's guiding principles (Breakwell, 1986).

Participants' relationship with Poland can be organised into three themes. The first two represent the dichotomous perception of Poland as being both a constraining society from

which freedom is sought, and a country with which strong attachments are evident. The result of the holding of opposing positions is reflected in the third theme which is concerned with tension and inner conflict. It is this last theme, regarding the psychological struggle between important values, which is most likely to be associated with mental health problems.

Relating to the UK (Master theme 2)

Valuing openness

The perception of the UK as an open society is evident throughout the participant group and is clearly an important factor in both the initial attraction and in the decision to stay. Participants refer to different examples of openness when extolling the virtues of life in the UK. For example, they describe valuing flexibility, tolerance, opportunity, optimism and a general sense of freedom, which they contrast with their experiences of Poland and give as reasons for their decision to migrate in the first place. How a host society responds to newcomers is highlighted as an important factor influencing the process of acculturation and the mental well-being of the migrant (Berry, 2003; Minas, 1999, cited in Bhugra, 2004, p.253). That participants perceive the UK as friendly and tolerant perhaps facilitates the migration experience.

Several participants refer to valuing the diversity of cultures living in London, and Anna describes how this enables her to disappear in the mix. Given the large number of foreign born people living in London (recent official figures produced for the Greater London Authority show that over a third of Londoners were born overseas (DMAG, 2009)), it would be reasonable to suggest that the phenomenon of being a migrant in London is normalised due to the high number of foreign born. Support for this theory is seen in Murphy's (1968) hypothesis that migrants living in high migrant communities present with fewer psychiatric problems. The significance of Anna's observation that migrants do not stand out in London may be supported by referring to aspects of Social Identity Theory, which proposes that positive self-concept is formed partially through an individual's affiliation with a particular group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Anna's positive identification with London's sizeable migrant population may provide her with a sense of belonging, preventing her from feeling ostracised, thereby protecting her self-esteem. According to identity process theory, this can be regarded as a coping strategy to reduce the threat to self-concept.

The openness and tolerance of the UK, as perceived by participants, together with the diversity of London's population, may facilitate acculturation and integration. Phinney et al. (2001) suggest that societies that embrace multiculturalism are likely to enable migrants to adapt more successfully, which may contribute to their psychological well-being. Returning to Maslow's theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943), the need for acceptance can be seen as an essential condition of reaching a self-actualised state. For example, Barbara describes feeling encouraged by the lack of discrimination she encounters in the UK, and compares this to her experience of Poland, which she described as intolerant. Discrimination represents an obvious threat to identity and self-esteem. Responding to such social phenomena by moving away from the threat, in this case by migrating to the UK, can be understood in IPT as a coping strategy.

Besides acceptance, other participants refer to valuing the optimistic and creative attitude found in their experiences of the UK. Also mentioned, enthusiastically, is the general friendliness of the people and the 'nice to be nice' culture of officials, which participants describe contrasts with their experiences of Poland. Pawel and Danuta make a specific comparison between the friendliness of the people in the UK and a 'culture of suspicion' in Poland, which they infer, makes trusting others difficult. This wary outlook may be understood as being related to aspects of Poland's communist past, such as state corruption and a prevalence of informants, which contributed towards a general climate of mistrust, as has been explored in the literature (e.g. Jordan, 2002; Schwartz and Bardi, 1997).

Again, such examples of openness may be understood, in the context of Maslow's theory of human motivation, as important social factors that create a fertile environment in which participants feel more able to maximise their potential and thus, as Kasia describes, allow her to fulfil her needs and make her dreams come true. Similarly, the role of social conditions has relevance in IPT. For example, the experience of openness can be understood as a necessary cultural feature in order for participants to avoid a threat to identity and to optimise self-esteem. Again, this highlights the perception that Polish society, in contrast to the UK, is threatening to participants' identity. The optimistic sense of the UK as a place where ambitions can be achieved and potential realised has been reported elsewhere in a recent study of Polish migrants in Scotland (Weishaar, 2010).

It is argued that the contrast that participants experience as a greater sense of freedom in the UK is, as previously mentioned, linked with differing societal values (e.g. Schwartz and Bardi, 1997). In collectivist societies the emphasis is less on individual pursuits and more on the needs of the collective (Hofstede, 1983, cited in Gambrel and Cianci, 2003, p.146). This highlights a criticism of Maslow's theory, i.e. its ethnocentricity (Gambrel and Cianci, 2003), which likely has greater relevance in capitalist societies such as the UK, where individualism has a more established history, and where self-esteem and personal development are accorded greater priority. As previously argued, this apparent flaw in Maslow's theory in fact serves to highlight an important, distinguishing contextual feature of participants' experiences. The participants of this study represent the first post-communist era generation in Poland and it is suggested that because of this their values are more in line with those of Western, individualist societies such as the UK. The sense of belonging (to family or group) that participants' parents' generation likely prioritised may now compete with identity values such as self-improvement and individual expression, which may explain participants' sense of feeling liberated and perhaps more 'at home' in the UK. Rather than migration threatening identity, as found by Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000), it is argued that the participants, prior to migrating, are already socialised to a more western, individualist outlook, which Polish society is perceived to inhibit and which the UK is seen to embrace. Thus, in IPT terms, migration removes the threat to identity and enables, in Maslow's terms, self-actualisation. It is the context of their migration in which Maslow's western construct is made relevant and this emphasises the socio-cultural influence on identity for the participants and highlights the distinguishing features of this generation of Poles.

Feeling disconnected

Despite the new found sense of freedom that participants associate with the UK, six of the group describe missing closeness and refer to experiencing a sense of disconnection regarding relationships with others. This can be understood as relating to cultural differences in social conventions and the concept of friendship, as well as to language and communication difficulties. The association between lacking language fluency and feeling disconnected may appear obvious given the function of language as the principle medium of interaction. Numerous studies have found a clear relationship between language ability and psychological well-being (e.g. Ward et al., 2001). It is evident that the inability to express

oneself adequately in the host language would significantly impede the development of close, personal relationships, thus increasing the likelihood of disconnection, isolation and alienation, all of which have been identified as stressors that migrants may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing (e.g. Berry, 1992). Though the participants in this study are fluent English speakers, three people refer specifically to their language skills as somehow inhibiting their progress and describe feeling frustrated by an inability to express specific emotions. The topic of language ability will be returned to in the discussion of the fourth master theme.

A sense of disconnection also emerges from more subtle forms of social interaction, which also appear to be associated with cultural differences. For example, Danuta's feelings of disconnection appear to stem from an uncertainty in knowing how to appropriately engage her British work colleagues in conversation and it seems that her understanding of social rules is not applicable in the UK. Magda and Monika understand their difficulties connecting with others as being due to cultural differences in socialising and in forming friendships. They appear to miss the closeness of their friendships in Poland, remarking on a British 'aloofness', and they perceive the British concept of 'friend' as resembling something closer to 'acquaintance' in Poland. Monika provides further insight into the difficulties she has connecting with others, when describing British politeness. On the one hand this is a welcome social convention, perhaps similar to the 'nice to be nice' culture that Pawel refers to, however, Monika finds the politeness to be somehow distancing, preventing intimacy. Barbara reflects on her lack of friends and observes how the friendliness of the people masked, according to her, a sense of isolation. Though the UK is generally perceived as a friendly society, it appears that forming deeper relationships may be problematic. A possibility for this unease may originate from the socio-cultural differences between Poland and the UK. For example, the differing values attached to the collective and the individual, as described by Hofstede (2001). Bhugra (2004) asserts that migrants moving from collectivist to individualist societies may have difficulty settling in to the host culture if their personal outlook is also collectivist. This may be due to a tendency for people from socio-centric societies to place greater emphasis and reliance on relationships with others as a form of support. Such an outlook may lead migrants to despondency in an egocentric society where social support may appear to be lacking. In IPT it is understood that identity is formed by a

range of influences including social, cultural and political factors (Breakwell, 2010). The above examples of difficulties relating to others represent threats to the existing values and beliefs about relationships within the identity structure. The threat may be brought to consciousness by inhibiting the continuity of a sense of belongingness, thereby harming self-esteem.

Participants hold positive and negative outlooks regarding their experiences of the UK. Whilst a strong sense of openness is clearly valued, this is to some extent counterbalanced by feelings of disconnection. Monika's assertion of the price of freedom being alienation is strongly worded though perhaps is representative of a common sentiment. It is highly probable that for most migrants, migration consists of gains as well as losses, as suggested elsewhere (e.g. Berry, 1992; Ward et al., 2001). For the participants, the perceived gains of migration may offer sufficient ballast against the experiences of disconnection, though the potential psychological distress that is strongly associated with social alienation (e.g. Mirowsky and Ross, 2003) remains valid.

Impact on self (Master theme 3)

Personal challenge

All participants refer to experiencing some form of personal difficulty as a consequence of the migration experience. A number of these challenges are referred to above, for example, the experience of tension and conflict and the sense of disconnection experienced by some. A further theme of personal challenge is the experience of self-doubt, several examples of which are alluded to by six of the participants. Berry et al. (2002) refer to self-doubt, along with low self-esteem and a sense of inferiority, as aspects of acculturative stress that migrants may be especially vulnerable to experiencing. The emergence of such psychological difficulties is likely related to individual as well as social factors (Ward et al., 2001). Furthermore, cultural identity plausibly has particular relevance. For example, Magda connects her low self-esteem with a sense of being of lower status as a Polish person in the UK, and Ewa reflects on Poland and Eastern European countries as having lower status due to their economic backgrounds, which she perceives as contributing to what she observes as a Polish (and Eastern European) inferiority complex. Though other participants are less direct in associating their experiences of self-doubt with their cultural identity, their perceptions of

Poland as pessimistic and oppressive, as evidenced in the themes above, may suggest the possible role of early cultural influences in their self-regard. According to IPT, the sense of cultural inferiority would derive from information in the social environment and form the content dimension of identity structure. Self-doubt represents the manifestation of the content coming into contact with the new culture.

While the existence of a Polish ‘inferiority complex’ may be difficult to determine, such a phenomenon has been referred to in the literature, (e.g. Cordell, 2000; Gomulka and Polonsky, 1991) which highlights historical losses of territory, political oppression and a lack of prosperity compared to Western Europe, as possible explanations.

The role of a positive self-regard in maintaining psychological health has been well documented in the literature (e.g. Baumeister, 1993; Rogers, 2004), and Beck (1975) illustrates the influence of cognitions regarding the self on an individual’s emotional state and his or her behaviour. Instances of the impact of low self-regard are exemplified in Magda’s reluctance to assert her authority, in Kasia’s tendency to discount her strengths, and in Danuta’s employment in roles that might be considered below her level of education. The experiences of self-doubt, combined with feelings of disconnection in the host country, and tensions of being torn between Poland and the UK, represent examples of acculturative stress and threats to identity. These stressors are not experienced by all participants at all times though they may offer insight into some of the challenges that may be faced by recent Polish migrants in the UK.

Personal development

The personal challenges associated with migration are part of participants’ experiences though they do not constitute the whole, and various examples of personal development are found for each member of the group. Five of the participants refer specifically to becoming more open. As demonstrated above, participants perceive the UK as a more open society than Poland, thus the process of becoming more open may be interpreted as a ‘taking on’ of some of the characteristics of the host society, which may be understood as a form of assimilation, using both Berry’s (2003) terminology to describe one of the strategies of acculturation, and Breakwell’s (1986) concept of the process of identity development. Given participants’

motivation to escape the confines of Poland, and their perception of openness as an attractive feature of life in the UK, it is perhaps unsurprising that openness is quickly incorporated into migrants' outlook. It may be argued that developing increased openness to experience is indeed a conscious, desired acculturative outcome that is in accord with the pre-existing identity structure.

Pawel's observation that his openness is retained during return trips to Poland suggests the depth of assimilation taking place, which manifests as internalised change, and is not merely situational. Pawel's self-perception of becoming more open to others as a result of spending time in the UK, offers further insight into the existence of a 'culture of suspicion' in Poland, where the social environment is perhaps less conducive to the development of openness traits. This example also emphasises the importance of understanding the social and historical context of migrants' backgrounds, in order to help make sense of their experiences, such as Pawel's initial suspicion of the friendliness of strangers.

While all the participants infer their embracing of living in a diverse society, three people specifically ascribe their experiences of living in a multicultural society to positive changes to their individual outlooks, for example, Magda and Barbara describe becoming more culturally aware and more tolerant of other cultures since living in London. It appears that this response is not unusual. Ward et al. (2001) analysed a range of studies concerning the impact of multiculturalism and found that increased openness towards, and positive perceptions of, other ethnic groups is a common response of individuals living in multicultural societies. Living in such an ethnically diverse society is a novel experience for all participants, and it appears to be an experience that they value. In IPT terms, it appears that participants value and assimilate the novelty of multiculturalism, which is perhaps facilitated by a predisposition towards cosmopolitan interests.

For half of the group, the process of migration serves as a 'coming of age' experience, and five of the participants describe feeling more mature as a result of taking on responsibilities and managing independently. Such experiences may be interpreted as reflecting a movement towards self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 2004). Contrastingly, IPT would recognise such developments as examples of assimilating and accommodating new identity

roles, which promote the attainment and maintenance of the guiding principle of self-efficacy. Seven of the participants describe gaining in self-confidence as a result of the experience of migration, which appears to be closely associated with overcoming challenges. Though the experience of personal challenge may cause psychological distress, the ability to endure hardship may in the long term be worthwhile since, as described widely in the literature on self-esteem, experiences of success and achievement are important in nurturing self-belief and inner confidence (e.g. Owens et al., 2006). An example of this is seen in the analysis where Barbara refers explicitly to how her self-esteem grew in response to successfully managing problems independently, i.e. such experiences enabled new identity structures to be formed.

The experience of migration provides participants with instances of personal challenge as well as personal growth. Self-doubt may be triggered by the stress of being in a foreign culture and may be associated with thoughts of inadequacy, connected with the culture of origin. At the same time, participants appear to draw strength from aspects of the migration experience, which may produce significant changes in outlook, particularly regarding openness. That contrasting responses exist for the same participant group suggests the diversity of experiences and consequent emotions that may be encountered during the migration experience. As demonstrated, negative and positive experiences may at times appear closely linked since it is through the overcoming or tolerating of personal challenges that self-confidence may emerge.

Adaptive ability (Master theme 4)

Personality factors

As reported by Ward et al. (2001), much of the literature on acculturation and the psychological impact of migration includes reference to the likely role that individual personality plays. Few large scale investigations of rigour have been conducted however, and the evidence appears largely anecdotal, though, as mentioned in the introduction and literature review, a recent study by Ward et al. (2004) found that two items from the 'Big Five' factor model of personality assessment (McCrae and Costa, 1987), namely extraversion and neuroticism, were connected with migrants' levels of adjustment to a new culture.

As discussed earlier, measurement of personality is not without problems, and personality traits were not formally measured in this research, however, participants' descriptions do appear to allude to particular personality characteristics. For example, strong evidence from the interviews shows that openness to experience is a dominant trait for seven of the participants. Though several of the participants describe becoming more open as a result of their experiences in the UK, for most, openness appears to be a pre-existing, established tenet of their identities. Though 'openness to experience' has not been found to relate to mental health or neuroticism (e.g. McCrae and Costa, 1985; Ward et al., 2004), certain dimensions of the category may offer adaptive qualities relevant to the migrant experience. For example, two of the six facets of openness to experience, as developed by McCrae and Costa (1987), include openness to *new* experiences and openness to values. Given the different value systems that may be encountered when moving from one culture to another, possessing such personality traits is likely to be highly beneficial to migration adjustment and in managing potential threats to identity.

An important personality trait evident in six of the participants is flexibility. This has been identified as a factor promoting positive adjustment to life transitions including migration (e.g. Ward et al., 2001), and is displayed in participants' flexible approach to problems, accommodating divergences to expectations and in tolerating challenging situations. Flexibility was similarly a commonly found trait in Weishaar's (2010) study of Poles in the UK. Another personality feature identified in half of the group is empathy. Ewa and Pawel provide succinct examples of how their ability to empathise with others enables them to adopt a rational perspective to challenges such as initial difficulties making friends. Empathy is incorporated in the 'agreeableness' trait of McCrae and Costa's Big Five (1987), which has been associated with positive psychological adjustment to migration (e.g. Ward et al., 2004). Other research suggests that the traits of openness, flexibility and empathy, demonstrated by participants, are apposite to migration adjustment. Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2001) developed a five factor multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) which may be a more appropriate tool for assessing the personalities of sojourners and migrants than the 'Big Five' model. The five dimensions include 'cultural empathy', 'open-mindedness', 'social initiative', 'emotional stability' and 'flexibility'. Studies adopting the MPQ have found support for the validity of the five traits in predicting adjustment to another culture (e.g. Leong, 2007; Suanet and Van de Vijver, 2009).

Independence is observed as a relevant personality characteristic for five of the participants. The ability to manage difficulties independently has obvious advantages, not least that participants may feel less dependent on others and therefore less anxious regarding the successful resolution of problems.

Motivation is a trait demonstrated by all participants and has been associated, generally, with success and achievement (e.g. Deci and Ryan, 1985). More specifically, motivation in migrants has been explored and has been found to lead to greater psychological adjustment (e.g. Ebata et al., 1996; Tseng, 2001). Boneva and Frieze (2001) suggest that (voluntary) migrants possess personality traits that distinguish them from those who choose to remain in their country of origin. They propose a 'migrant personality' consisting of high levels of 'achievement motivation', particularly concerning career ambitions and personal development, and lower family orientation. These findings appear to fit with the personality characteristics and values of the participants of this study (excepting, for some, the lower family orientation), as is particularly demonstrated in the hypothesised desire to self-actualise. Boneva and Frieze (2001) make the further assertion that traits belonging to the migrant personality are stable and may exist throughout the lifespan, suggesting that restlessness, frustration and multiple migrations may take place where the realisation of ambitions is obstructed.

A final personality attribute expressed by five of the participants is optimism. The effect of responding to negative life events with optimism has been extensively considered in the literature on resilience and coping (e.g. Solberg Nes, 2006), and has been found to aid psychological adjustment. The role of an optimistic disposition has also been the focus of research on the experiences of migrants and refugees. In a study by Riolli et al. (2006) individuals with optimistic attitudes were found to possess more adaptive coping strategies and more effective stress reduction methods, compared to those who had pessimistic outlooks. Overall, personality factors appear to play a significant role in migrants' experiences. This view is supported by identity process theory, in which personality traits are acknowledged as being one of a number of factors involved in the formation of identity. Breakwell (1986) regards personality and also cognitive capacity as fairly static elements which interact with the social context in shaping self-concept. For example, a flexible,

optimistic and open personality is clearly more likely to respond adaptively to potential threats to identity, thus preserving self-esteem.

Previous experience

A small number of studies exploring the psychosocial adjustment of migrants have focused on the role of previous experience in their analyses (e.g. Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Parker and McEvoy, 1993). Their findings suggest that those migrants with prior experience of the culture and language of the host country adjust more easily. A further relevant finding was that previous experience of a foreign culture was likely to aid psychological adjustment. Several participants offer examples from their histories which relate to these findings. For example, five of the interviewees personally experienced migration prior to their arrival in the UK, and three describe migration as a feature of their family identities. Importantly, these early experiences are described in positive terms, which likely contributes towards the development of an affirmative association with the phenomenon, which in turn may instil a sense of optimism and confidence regarding migrating.

Two of the participants, without previous, direct, cross-cultural experience, offer examples from the pre-migration phase of preparing for migration by researching the prospective country and undertaking a 'mental preparation' through imagination. The previous experiences relating to migration that seven of the participants demonstrate constitute a socialisation process which may enable migrants to adjust to the new environment, as suggested in the literature (e.g. Ward et al. 2001). It has been suggested that migration adjustment difficulties arise due to problems managing social interactions in the new culture (e.g. Argyle, 1969). Thus, cross-cultural preparation in the form of personal experience of migration or of other cultures may be beneficial to migrants. This has been recognised in the business world, as seen in the proliferation of cross-cultural training programmes, particularly designed for international business executives (Ward et al, 2001).

Aside from the previous practical experiences aiding migration adjustment outlined above, there is evidence in the group of an earlier socialisation and inclination to the EU/UK and to western culture, which serves as an important facilitator in the transition. For example, several participants express a prior interest in the concept of the European Union, and it is

apparent that most of the group elected to focus on developing English language skills from an early age, as if in preparation for a prospective move to 'the West'. Further evidence of a western mindset can be seen in participants' motivation to pursue individual interests and in the greater emphasis on personal development over group or family memberships, as might be expected in socio-centric societies. All of this suggests that participants' identities were already inclined, and to some extent socialised, to UK life prior to migrating. Though migrants may typically be expected to experience threat to identity following migration, for the interviewees the transition can be said to represent an opportunity to enhance rather than hinder the four principles of self-esteem, self-efficacy, continuity and distinctiveness.

Besides the relevance of previous cross-cultural experience and prior socialisation, participants infer from their backgrounds other forms of helpful preparation. For example, it is widely accepted in the fields of psychotherapy and personality development that early experiences strongly influence the way in which an individual perceives the world (e.g. Beck, 1975). Evidence of a secure upbringing, previous experiences of self-efficacy and healthy adaptation to change, are examples provided by three of the participants from their early experiences. Though not directly cross-cultural experiences, such factors have been identified as enabling adaptation in the migrant (e.g. Ward et al, 2001). This can be further understood by referring to identity process theory, since past experiences shape personality and identity, which affects the availability of adaptive coping strategies for managing threats to the self (Breakwell, 2010).

Language matters

Language ability has been identified as an important factor in how migrants adjust to a new culture, for example, Berry (1992) regards language acquisition as one of the key measurements of acculturation. Referring to the concept of acculturation strategies, Berry (1992) contends that a lack of ability to communicate in the language of the host country is associated with separation and marginalisation, which may have detrimental consequences for the psychological well-being of the individual. Similar findings have emerged from other studies, for example, Bhugra (2004) and Minas (1999) have specified the influence of communication difficulties, i.e. language deficit, on acculturative stress and adjustment problems. In reference to identity process theory, difficulties communicating are likely to be

particularly detrimental to an individual's self-efficacy and self-esteem and consequently represent a potential threat to identity. Eade and Garapich (2009) studied a Polish charity in London, 'Barka', which provides support for socially excluded Eastern European migrants, and found that common amongst clients was a low level of English language skills. Unsurprisingly, language fluency has been associated with positive psychological adjustment (e.g. Ward et al, 2001). The evidence for the impact that language ability has on the migration experience is clear.

For each of the participants in the study, the ability to communicate in English has obvious benefits, such as increased employment opportunities, self-efficacy, social engagement and a general sense of empowerment. Participants express a strong awareness of the significance of language ability in their lives, and refer to learning English as an essential tool for succeeding in the UK, advice which they offer to other Poles. Several participants describe experiencing initial difficulties with language, and refer to how a lack of English contributed to a sense of disconnection and disempowerment, as described in the discussion of the above theme, 'relating to the UK'. They observe how self-confidence and self-esteem increased as language ability improved, thus providing a succinct example of the positive impact of language competence on well-being. Given the apparent benefits of language competency to migrants' self-efficacy, language training may be advocated. Notably, in the UK, English language classes were made freely available for all migrants up until 2007 when funding was cut, which evoked significant protest from relevant organisations (Ford, 2007).

Similarly to the role of prior cross-cultural experience, language ability represents a significant variable in the adjustment process. An early focus on developing English skills is suggestive of an identification with western culture, which likely assists adaptation.

Coping strategies

The psychological impact of migration is dependent on a wide range of individual and situational factors, as discussed above. Two important considerations are how stressors are met and the strategies employed to cope with difficulties. As several studies have shown, the frequency or significance of a stressor may have less influence on psychological outcome than how it is appraised and subsequently responded to (e.g. Lazarus and Folkman, 1984;

Zeidner and Endler, 1996). In the extensive literature on coping, consensus exists in the acknowledgement of a range of different categories of coping. Discussing the role of coping strategies in response to threats to identity, Breakwell argues that a coping strategy constitutes, “any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity” (2010, p.6.5). Active strategies such as problem solving are generally found to be beneficial, whereas the effectiveness of passive strategies, e.g. avoidance, is uncertain and possibly dysfunctional. Such findings from the general literature on coping are equally valid in studies of coping in the field migration adjustment (Ward et al., 2001) and in identity process theory (Breakwell, 1986).

Coping strategies employed by participants are, for the most part, representative of action approaches, i.e. problem focused, emotion focused, and appraisal focused approaches (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006), the latter two appearing more pronounced. It has been suggested (e.g. Cross, 1995) that migrants from collectivist societies may be more inclined towards managing symptoms of problems rather than tackling the problem itself, as a problem focused approach would imply. Cross (1995) suggests that this may be due to a socio-centric sense of self, which may imply a more external locus of control compared to that found for people from more individualistic cultures. However, Ward et al. (2001) express caution of such assumptions due to the limited amount of research exploring cross-cultural differences in coping.

The main emotion focused strategy used by the group appears to be in the form of social support, specifically in the form of support from friends and family, which all participants describe drawing on. An interesting observation is the symbolic significance that family support appears to provide. For example, despite their physical unavailability, five of the participants describe feeling emotionally supported by their families in Poland, suggesting that knowledge of an internalised source of support may provide a sense of security. The symbolic representation of security is closely related to Bowlby's (1988) concept of the 'secure base', which appears to have relevance in the experiences of five of the participants. The concept of the secure base, introduced by Mary Ainsworth, building on Bowlby's attachment theory, was originally developed to understand the caregiver's role in infant exploration. It was hypothesised that a child with a secure attachment to the parental figure

feels a sense of security that enables exploration of the local environment whilst tolerating brief absences of the caregiver (Bowlby, 1988). During childhood development, experiences of attachment with caregivers are understood to shape an internal sense of attachment that becomes the blueprint for relating to others. A secure base then is used to provide reassurance so that exploration can take place safely and securely. It is hypothesised that this process is used from childhood throughout adult life (Bowlby, 1988).

Such symbolic representations can be understood from the perspective of identity process theory as cognitive elements of identity that are associated with memory which, when recalled, enable an individual to allay a threat to the sense of self, which being separated from the support of one's social group may trigger (Breakwell, 1986).

For the participants, strategies employed to ensure safe exploration of the new environment may be conceptualised as examples of developing secure bases. For example, for seven of the participants, a secure base may be represented by the pre-migration arrangements of employment or an initial plan to stay with friends. A further example is Magda's returning home to Poland, for one week following a burglary at her residence in London. Parallels may be drawn with infant observation in the 'strange situation test', where the child returns to the caregiver for reassurance before returning to exploring (Bowlby, 1988). Tseng (2001) provides a similar example in the experience of migrants in suggesting the importance of 'cultural retreats' to the home country as an aid to psychological adjustment in the host country. Identifying the function of secure bases in adults may have clinical relevance. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) carried out experiments in which participants who were primed with associations of a secure base temporarily responded with increased openness towards another group.

Support from family and friends is not limited to symbolic reference, and technology clearly plays an important role in maintaining social contact from afar, thus narrowing the distance between Poland and the UK. Technological advances to emerge since the development of the Internet have significantly eased the ability to communicate internationally, e.g. the use of communication tools such as Skype, as referred to by Monika, and as described in the literature (e.g. Burrell, 2009). Besides enabling the maintenance of social support from

family, the use of technology in communications permits the maintenance of an ongoing relationship with Poland, thus providing a safety net for potential problems arising in the UK. The availability and use of such technology also distinguishes this group from earlier generations of migrants.

All participants demonstrate adaptive use of cognitive appraisal strategies to manage difficulties. Examples include perspective taking, recognising the temporality of hardships, challenging the evidence of unhelpful thinking, and positive reframing, the latter which has been associated with the personality trait of optimism (Zeidner and Endler, 1996). The effectiveness of type of coping strategy employed is largely dependent on the context (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Thus it is difficult to draw specific conclusions on what might be the most effective or appropriate response to a problematic circumstance, since a number of situational and individual factors need to be considered. However, active strategies, including cognitive and behavioural approaches, have generally been associated with a reduction in psychological distress, compared to avoidant or passive approaches (Zeidner and Endler, 1996). An aspect of cognitive strategy that appears particularly adaptive is related to a tempering of expectations, as demonstrated by half the group. Numerous studies have identified the relationship between expectations and psychological well-being, where underestimation of difficulties may lead to distress (e.g. McKelvey and Webb, 1996; Ward et al., 2001). Thus lowered or realistic expectations may serve as a protective factor.

Participants display an array of adept approaches to coping, which accords with similar recent studies of Poles in the UK (Weishaar, 2010). The few examples of less functional coping strategies include excessive independence, leading to a rejection of a potentially helpful source of social support. A further strategy identified in one participant as potentially problematic is an over-reliance on friends and family in Poland, which may impair developing a social life in the UK and thus contribute to a sense of disconnection, which may lead to low self-esteem and threaten identity. Coping strategies are widely recognised as playing a significant role in psychological responses to stress (Ward et al, 2001). As suggested by Heppner and Lee (2002), where unhelpful coping strategies are identified, these may be improved through training and adaptation.

Personality factors, coping strategies, language skills and past experience, all contribute to adaptive ability. Identifying and understanding the role and function of each factor is likely to be of particular benefit to migration researchers and to those working therapeutically with migrants.

Summary and conclusion

This study has highlighted a number of significant themes related to the experience of migration for a sub-group of recent Polish migrants. It is evident from the analysis that living in the UK is valued by participants and is associated with a sense of freedom, to develop personally, and with fewer restrictions. This is contrasted with feelings of constraint that are associated with Poland, which are influential in participants' motivation to migrate. Despite the original desire to leave their native country, participants remain strongly attached to Poland via relationships with family and friends. The experience of being pulled in opposing directions by differing sets of important values results in tension, of wanting to pursue personal development whilst being drawn back to Poland through family obligations and a desire for social and familial closeness.

Openness and tolerance are perceived characteristics of UK society that are particularly valued, though a sense of disconnection is also apparent, with migrants experiencing a lack of closeness in relationships with others, compared to Poland. This represents a threat to identity in the form of challenging one's sense of belonging to a cohesive group, which as one participant succinctly declared, is perhaps the price to pay for freedom. Instances of self-doubt are present in participants' post-migration experiences and may be connected with a 'Polish inferiority complex', which may inhibit progress and affect psychological adjustment. Despite these difficulties, participants associate more their experience of migration with personal growth. Particular areas of development include gaining in self-confidence, becoming increasingly open, becoming more aware of other cultures, and experiencing a process of maturation.

Migration clearly brings rewards as well as challenges. The process of migration is eased by the attributes that participants possess. Personality factors including openness, flexibility, empathy, motivation and optimism, which have all been associated with positive

psychological adjustment in migrants (e.g. Ward et al, 2001), and which contribute to the maintenance of self-esteem according to Breakwell (1986), are evident for the whole group. Participants also demonstrate the use of a range of adaptive coping strategies, including problem focused, emotion focused and cognitive focused approaches. Previous positive exposure to cross-cultural experiences appears relevant as a form of preparation for migration, and English language ability has obvious benefits.

The sense of early identification and socialisation with western values, representative of English language learning, has particular significance. Elsewhere, migration has been considered to represent a threat to identity (e.g. Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000). However, it is argued that migration for this sub-group signifies a reduction in the threat to identity. It is argued that in moving to the UK, participants are provided with an environment that is less in conflict with their personal identities, which have been shaped by the social, political and economic changes taking place in Poland since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe from 1989. Where Poland is seen as inhibiting personal growth and self-actualisation, the UK appears supportive of such values.

Assumptions of Polish migrants that I was conscious of holding, prior to collecting data, included the supposition that their primary motivation for migrating to the UK was economic. I was also aware of believing that most post-2004 Poles were employed in manual work and the service industry. During the research process both of these assumptions were challenged. I have learnt that participants' motivation to migrate is significantly more complex, and appears to relate to an interplay between social and political changes taking place in Poland and intrapersonal factors, which can be understood through exploring values and identity processes. I have additionally learnt that the demography of post-2004 Poles is inclusive of people from a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

A study of this size has obvious limitations regarding generalisability though it is hoped that this is balanced by the validity brought by the in-depth level of attention given to the experiences of a few. Furthermore, given the overall imbalance of quantitative modes of enquiry in the study of migrant experiences, this study hopefully contributes to the breadth of perspectives by offering a contextualised and idiographic understanding. A possible

limitation of the study resides in the use of English in interviews. Church (1982) suggests that conducting interviews in a language other than the participants' mother tongue may reduce access to the emotional content of participants' experiences. A counter argument to this may lie in the richness of the excerpts however, which suggests that participants' expressive abilities were unimpaired by language.

Though conducting the interviews through the medium of English may not have significantly impaired expressive ability, an important issue that ought to be acknowledged relates to the potential power imbalance created. As a male representative of the host culture, interviewing mainly Polish females in English, my native language, I acknowledge the possibility that a power dynamic may have been active in the interviews, which may have influenced the responses of the participants. Though I explicitly encouraged openness, and there is certainly evidence from the excerpts of participants expressing some negative views of the UK, suggesting that this was the case, there nevertheless may have existed implicit pressure to regard the UK in more favourable light. Power dynamics associated with gender, socio-economic background, language, relationship to the host country and legal status, may all have influence on participant responses. Though it may be difficult to monitor and avoid such processes, acknowledging their potential to influence the outcome is imperative, particularly in conducting cross-cultural research.

The focus of this research has been on those Poles living in London. Since the literature indicates that recent Polish migrants are spread throughout the UK (e.g. Rabindrakumar, 2008), it is uncertain how applicable these findings are to the experiences of Poles living elsewhere. This represents a limitation of the study and future research focusing on Poles living outside London, particularly those living in rural communities, may be of particular value. A further caveat concerns the demographic focus of the study. All participants are university educated, aged between twenty-two and thirty-three, and are in successful careers. Though this represents a significant proportion of the demographic of the most recent wave of Polish migrants (Pollard et al., 2008), it is clearly not representative of this group as a whole, and further research focusing on the experiences of Polish migrants of different socio-economic backgrounds would be beneficial.

Significantly, those Poles more likely to come into contact with mental health services are, on reflection, unlikely to be representative of those participants interviewed for the study, who generally have had successful adaptations. Rather, it is those who are less equipped to adapt, e.g. those without English language fluency or fulfilling employment, and those lacking in education and skills. A disadvantage of the current study therefore lies in the difficulty accessing participants in more vulnerable circumstances. Indeed it is highly probable that such a sample would lead to the development of themes that differed significantly to those that emerged from the analysis in the present study. Whilst not devaluing the importance of the participants' experiences here, it is acknowledged that the decision to advertise the study only to those who could converse in English excluded those perhaps more in need of psychological interventions. Possibly, themes relating to alienation, subordination, and psychosocial problems may have been more pronounced in a different sample. Furthermore, it is possible that the participants of this study were motivated to volunteer to take part in the research because they felt positive about their achievements and their adaptation, and the interviews may have served as an affirmative experience.

Though mental health problems were not the focal point of this study, the themes from the analysis relating to tensions and personal challenge may represent sources of psychological distress for those Poles who may be more psychologically vulnerable and who may be less equipped to manage some of the stresses of adaptation. In this sense, understanding an aspect of the adaptation process for a 'non clinical' sample may nevertheless have clinical relevance. Additionally, developing awareness of specific features of migration for this particular sub-group, e.g. the socio-historical context and issues around identity, may benefit counselling psychologists by contributing to their knowledge and understanding of a potential client group.

Whilst acknowledging my initial attempts to recruit participants from a wider range of backgrounds, and the practicalities of time and resources that limited my flexibility, the experience of conducting the study causes me to reflect on the difficulty in research of accessing people from certain social groups. The recruitment difficulties experienced in the initial phase, i.e. the paucity of response received from strategically placed flyers, may suggest that Polish people, and perhaps other migrant groups, are suspicious of enquiries

deriving from outside or from British sources. This may be understood as relating to negative attitudes towards migrants in media outlets and to the growth of right wing, xenophobic political organisations such as the British National Party and the English Defence League. This compounds the sense of inaccessibility and alienation that some migrants may experience and wakes in me the thought that researchers and clinicians ought to be prepared to ‘go the extra mile’ in order to engage such groups.

The conspicuous gender imbalance of the sample, with only one male representative, may provoke conjecture on a lack of openness in Polish males or their reluctance to reflect on personal experiences. It could be further speculated that their unavailability may represent the difficulty of acknowledging and positioning oneself as struggling, which may be perceived as an emasculating process. With a sample of this size however, such speculations can sensibly be no more than just that, though speculations may form starting points for future research.

Another avenue for further research concerns the experiences of those migrants returning to Poland. It has been suggested that Poles returning from the UK and Ireland are presenting with psychological adjustment difficulties (Zadroga, 2008). Given the value that participants attach to the experience of openness and a general sense of freedom found in the UK, and the impact that all this likely has on nurturing identity development and self-esteem, it is perhaps understandable that culture shock may be experienced on re-entry to Poland, to a society that participants describe as constraining and lacking in flexibility.

Participants constitute the first generation of migrants of post-communist, post-EU accession Poland. They represent a transitional phase in Polish culture, which has likely implications for how Polish people perceive themselves and how they experience migration. This study has hopefully offered some understanding of this process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Flyer

Are you Polish?

Would you like to take part in an interesting study?

My name is Paul and I am a trainee psychologist at the University of East London. For my doctoral research I am exploring the Polish migrant experience.

If you're interested and feel you have something to say then I'd like to hear from you. The study will involve an interview lasting around 1 hour.

Please get in touch if you think you'd like to participate or just want further information.

**I look forward to hearing from you.
Paul O'Brien**

[contact details removed]

Appendix 2 – Information sheet

‘Exploring the Polish migrant experience.’

Introduction

This study is concerned with exploring the experience of migration. It is being conducted by Paul O’Brien, a doctoral trainee psychologist, under the supervision of Professor Rachel Tribe, in the School of Psychology at the University of East London.

Volunteer status and confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Confidentiality is assured in all published and written data resulting from the study. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. You may elect to withdraw from this study at any time and the information collected from you will be destroyed. If you decide to participate the information you provide will be used only for the completion of this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to find out more about how migration is experienced by Polish people who have migrated to the UK since 2004. The study will require an interview to take place, lasting approximately one hour. There are no known risks to participating in this research. Though there is likely to be no direct benefit to your participation in the study, your involvement will contribute to further research and our understanding of the issues of migration faced by Polish migrants. Please note, you will not be paid for participating in the study.

Ethical clearance

This study has received ethical clearance from the School of Psychology ethics committee at the University of East London.

Appendix 3 – Consent form

‘Exploring the Polish migrant experience.’

I agree to take part in the above study on the understanding that the information provided by me will be treated as strictly confidential and anonymous. Should information about me be used for publications or presentation, it will be ensured that no reference to my identity is made.

I understand that I have the right to access the results of the research and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or giving reasons.

Date.....

Print name.....

Participant’s signature.....

Date.....

Print name.....

Researcher’s signature.....

Appendix 4 – Interview schedule

- 1) What factors led you to make the decision to migrate?
- 2) How much preparation was involved prior to migrating?
- 3) Before migrating, what were your expectations?
- 4) Is there anything that you found difficult when you first arrived or afterwards?
- 5) How did you deal with these difficulties?
- 6) How did your expectations compare to your experiences since migrating?
- 7) How do you feel you were/are received by the residents in this country?
- 8) How do you think you've adapted to life in this country?
- 9) What has helped you overcome challenges?
- 10) How would you describe your relationship with the country you left?
- 11) Has this perception changed during your time here? Do plan to stay in the UK?
- 12) Do you think you have gained anything from migrating, on a personal as well as a practical level?
- 13) On reflection what would have helped you settle after migrating?
- 14) Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?
- 15) What would you advise a Polish person who is thinking of moving to the UK?
- 16) Is there anything else related to being a migrant or having migrated that you think is important to talk about?

Appendix 5 – Debriefing form

Thank you for your participation in this study.

The purpose of this research has been to explore Polish people's experience of migrating. It is acknowledged in the literature that the process of migration is a potentially stressful experience. This study is particularly focused on discovering how Polish migrants in the UK experience migration and how any difficulties/stressors are managed. Since 2004 the number of people migrating from Poland to the UK has steadily increased. As a result, there is greater chance that psychologists will come into contact with Poles. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the research concerning the experiences of recent Polish migrants to the UK.

If material discussed during the interview has caused distress and you feel you would benefit from support then please find a list of options below:

Saneline* 0845 767 8000
Samaritans 0845 790 9090
Nightline 0207 631 0101

www.sane.org.uk
www.samaritans.org.uk

*Interpreter service available

In addition, if you wish to discuss any issues relating to the project or your participation in the study, you may contact me at the address below.

Paul O'Brien
c/o School of Psychology,
University of East London,
Romford Road,
Stratford,
London
E15 4LZ

[personal details removed]

Appendix 6 - Research diary

Sample excerpts:

- What are my assumptions of post-2004 Polish people in the UK? I am aware of a stereotypical strong work ethic. I am also conscious of supposing that the majority of recently arrived Poles are employed in mainly manual work and that their main motivation for being in the UK is financial. This understanding has been fuelled by media representations, which prior to collecting data, has provided me with my main source of knowledge of this group. I am aware of the dangers of holding assumptions and hope that by acknowledging them here I can reduce their unhelpful influence on the research process.
- What is the influence of growing up in a communist country? Is there a greater sense of collectivism and what impact might this have on moving to an individualist society? Will negative aspects of living in the UK emerge, e.g. the experience of materialism and alienation in a consumer society? Friendliness in the UK is initially met with suspicion. This is a likely influence of a culture of mistrust inherent in Polish society. This leads to thoughts about the prevalence of informers and authoritarian policing in communist Poland. The impact of such experiences on the individual may be significant. But, I must be careful not to assume about cultural phenomena and its impact. Possibly my perception is skewed due to growing up in the UK and being socialised by Western values and capitalist democracy.
- Participants talk about the use of technology as a way to keep in touch with family and friends back home. This causes me to think about the impact of phenomena such as the internet, Skype, and budget air travel. Distances between nations appear to have narrowed through technological advances. Does this perhaps make the experience of migration in current times easier? This also causes me to think about the differences between the experiences of recent Polish migrants and the experiences of Poles who migrated in previous waves. Not only technology but also the very different historical context of previous waves.
- The determination expressed by participants to improve their lives and to reach their potential causes me to think of Maslow's theory of self-actualisation. Possibly moving to

the UK represents a more fertile environment in which to achieve inner drives. Is living in Poland perceived as restricting opportunity to self-actualise? This would fit with the sense of constraint apparent in many participants' descriptions. Important to keep in mind that self-actualisation is a Western concept. Self-actualisation may be represented by a more socio-centric position in collectivist societies however.

- Participants represent the first post-communist generation to migrate from Poland. Possibly some of the tension experienced relates to being caught between two cultures, e.g. desire to pursue individual motivations and obligation to family.
- Might Poles returning to Poland experience acculturation difficulties?

Appendix 7 - Example of early analytic process: Excerpt from Ewa

Descriptive/conceptual & linguistic comments	Original transcript – lines 202-220	Emerging themes
<p>Disliking homogeneity of Poland</p> <p>Preferring diversity of UK</p> <p>Exclamation (!)</p> <p>Feels freer in UK</p> <p>Reflecting on English reserve</p>	<p>E: I can't be there for too long because the society is so homogenous, you know, it's just one type of people, everyone thinks the same, everyone looks the same, and if you, I don't know, if you, even, if you would wear something different, you'll be like, 'what!?', you know, they, you wouldn't feel accepted, you wouldn't feel yeh, so there is...</p> <p>I: So it seems, you feel a bit freer over here then perhaps?</p> <p>E: Yeh definitely, definitely.</p> <p>P: Right, erm, so how do you feel you've been er received by, you've already touched on this, but erm, how, how do you feel you've been received by the, the residents of this country or, you know, the natives, if you like.</p> <p>S: Ok this is erm, I think many people would say, oh English people are reserved and all this, I think it's not true because erm, I think you will feel it in any place where you come to when you're new er, well I feel it, that, you know, everyone else has already have their net of friends and they don't have this need for making new friends, so obviously er, when I'm a new person I have to make most of the effort to sort of, you know, make contacts. Erm so yeh I can understand this and it's nothing er about English people or any, anyone else really, it's just normal, you know, people who have grown up er here have had their lives here, their own friends and stuff, they know what they're doing in their free time and when you're new you have to somehow fit into it.</p>	<p>Poland as stifling in its homogeneity and lack of freedom of expression</p> <p>Need to feel free and accepted</p> <p>Empathy with host population</p> <p>Conscious of self as outsider – enables patience in making friends</p> <p>Normalising – aids adaptive Ability</p> <p>Reluctance to criticise UK? My influence?</p>

Appendix 8 – Master table of themes (excerpt)

Master table of themes for the group

Master theme 1: Relating to Poland

Freeing self from perceived constraints of Poland

Monika:

Urge to separate from home. Sense of being tied to Poland. Find self/develop separate identity

Poland as limiting freedom

Sense of escaping constraints of Poland

Perceiving Polish culture as rude

Magda:

Poland as homogenous and insular

Negative perception of Poland

Inflexibility in Poland

Pawel:

Feeling trapped – motivation to migrate

Rejecting constraints of conservative culture

Freedom from constraints of Poland/overcoming suppression

Polish culture of mistrust

Barbara:

Perceiving Poland as a constraining, inflexible culture

Ewa:

Perceiving Poland as stiflingly homogenous

Perceiving Poland as inhibiting freedom of expression

Kasia:

Perceiving Poland as constraining

Perception of Poland as stifling independence and blocking self-actualisation

Unwillingness to accept perceived subjugating conventions of Polish culture

Rejecting Polish conventions/traditional expectations

Polish culture clashes with personal values

Motivated to free self from constraints of Poland

Danuta:

Obstacles/constraints re. living in Poland

Poland as lacking opportunities

Urge to be free

Aspiring to break free from cultural baggage

Eager to escape Poland

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